

ناصر خسرو قبادیانی



Naṣir Khusrow Qubādiyānī



notes for a bayān given by:
Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee
at the Islamic Study Center, Charlottesville, Virginia



That sage then set his hand upon his heart
(a hundred blessings be on that hand and heart!)
And said, I offer you the remedy of proof and demonstration;
but if you accept,
I shall place a seal upon your lips which must never be broken.



يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

yadu-llāhi fowqa ʾaydīhim

And the Hand of Allāh is above their hands!
(Sūrah al-Fath 25:7)



[Cover Photo: Road in Badakshān (Бадахшон/巴達克山/استان بدخشان)
on way to the Maqām of Naṣīr al-Khusrow in Yamgan, Badakshān]



2014/1434

Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee
Green Mountain School
GreenMountainSchool.Org
313sand313@gmail.com



On the fifth of March (23 Sha[°]ban 437) in the year 1046 of the Common Era a man, Abu Mu[°]in Naṣr, son of Khusraw, from the town of Qubadiyan in the district of Marv in northeastern Persia who describes himself as being, "...a scribe by profession and one of those in charge of the revenue service (of the ruler)" leaves his comfortable and somewhat disolute life of some forty years behind in order to undertake a pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Makkah on the basis of a spiritual dream (*ru[°]yah*) which he relates as follows:

"One night in a dream I saw someone speaking to me saying, 'How long will you continue to drink of this wine which destroys the intellect of men? If you were to stay sober it would be better for you.'

In reply I said, "The wise have not been able to come up with anything other than this wine to lessen the sorrows of this world.'

"He answered me, saying, 'To be without your senses is no repose. He cannot be called wise who leads one to senselessness. Rather it is better to seek out that which increases one in reason and in wisdom.'

'Where can I find such a thing?' I asked.

'Seek and you shall find!' and then he pointed to the *qibla* (direction of prayer in Makkah) and said no more.

'When I awoke, I remembered everything which had made a truly great impression on me.' You have woken from last night's sleep,' I said to myself, 'when will you awaken from a sleep of forty years. I reflected that until I changed all my ways I would never find true happiness.' (*Safarnāma* 1-2)

Thus he left everything behind and, with his brother and a servant, embarked on a pilgrimage to Makkah which in the end would take seven years and 2,800, miles most of which was on foot.

An account of this journey, compiled in a later period of his life, is his well known work the *Safarnāma* or *Safarnāmé* (سفرنامه), for which he used notes that he had taken along his seven-year journey. The prose resembles a travelogue (as opposed to his poetic and philosophical *Diwān*). In the beginning he recounts an extraordinary dream (see above) in which he converses with a man who encourages him to seek out that which is truly beneficial. This dream vision (*ru[°]yā*/رؤيا) results in a complete and lasting change in his life.



Nāṣir-i Khusraw's travels as described in the *Safarnama*.

Credit: Wikipedia



Today, which just so happens to be the fifth of March in the year 2014 of the Common Era, is exactly the day to 968 years that Nāṣir-i Khusraw set out on his journey. I pray that this “coincidence” turns out to be propitious in telling the tale and making known some of the life of Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﷺ which is known in the West to some academics, Persian scholars, a smattering of people drawn to gnosticism and mysticism and few else, though he continues to be well known in Iran where his book is widely taught from high school on. Perhaps it may also be of some use to tell just why I happen to be writing about him.

I am one of those “smattering of people” in the West drawn to mysticism and gnosticism and, beyond that I have read widely all of my life and over the last few years in this my seventh decade of life I have been drawn, as a Muslim, to try to understand the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ which reads as follows:

As related by °Abdu-llāh b. °Umar – “Whoever dies without being bound by the oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*), dies the death of the time of ignorance.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (1851). And in another form “Who-soever dies without recognizing the °Imām of his time dies the death of ignorance (*jahiliyyah*).” (Ṣaḥīḥ Bukḥarī and Ahmad b. Hanbal, *al-Musnad*).

So far as the first ḥadīth goes, I have always (or at least since I was 30) felt “safe”, for I gave my bay‘ah for the first time when I was thirty and have given it three or four times since due to the deaths of my different shuyukḥ (may Allāh ﷻ have mercy on all of them) over time and once when the person who advertised himself as being a shaykh turned out to be something else, not that he was a “bad” man but just that he wasn’t what he said he was.

So for some 45 years I have felt safe on the first count but on the second count: “Whosoever dies without recognizing the ‘Imām of his time dies the death of ignorance (*jahiliyyah*).” I was not overly concerned as I was with my shaykh and that sufficed. I only began on the death of my shaykh ﷺ to really question if I *truly* knew the ‘Imām ﷺ of my time and, on deeper introspection, I realised that I did *not* truly know the ‘Imām ﷺ of my time which has led to major change in my life.

As some of you who are reading or listening to this know, I received *khilafah* from my Shaykh Dr. Ibrahim al-Baṭawī, who was a professor for some twenty-five years at Azhar University dealing mainly with foreign (‘*ajnaḇī*/أجنبي) students and a Ṣhaḍḥḍḥulī shaykh who was a student and one of the *khulafā’* (الخلفاء) of Shaykh Sidi Salamah Radī. I also received ‘*Ijāzāh* (إجازة) in Muraqaba from Dr. Syed ‘Ali Ashraf (Allāh ﷻ mercy him) and ‘*Ijāzāh* in Calling to Allāh ﷻ (*da‘wah*/دعوة) from Shaykh Umar ‘Abdullah (Allāh ﷻ mercy him) a BaAlawi from the Comorro Islands and *Khilāfah* from Shaykh Qūṭub-u-Din Yar Faridī, a Nizamiyya Ḥistiyya shaykh.

So, as I said, I felt pretty “safe” and my main concern really was to find and “grow” at least one of my students to take my place when I died so that our particular Ṣhaḍḥḍḥulī line would continue. But one day, in the midst of my reflections, I realized that I truly did not know, as I have said, the ‘Imām ﷺ of my time and from that moment on my life changed to the extent that all of my various ‘*Ijazāt* and *Khulafāh* faded to insignificance on a certain level and I began to neglect my students as I realised I could not really serve them in full and I urgently began to seek the ‘Imām ﷺ of my time. In this respect I must confess I have not been fully successful though, by the Grace of Allāh ﷻ, I have by now managed to catch sight of him on more than one occasion as well as, I believe (though I am sure I can be fooled as I have been before), heard him speak and believe, to the degree that it is possible, have understood his words and have endeavored to act, as best I can, on those words.

All of these, I realise, are preliminary steps and until I can actually speak with him and consciously give him my bay[°]ah I will not have been successful; and more than that, since I am now seventy-five, I am not sure if I will have enough time and only pray to Allāh ﷻ that He, through His Infinite Grace, will make it possible and I will be able to both see and know the °Imām ؒ of the time.

When I say this has brought about a massive, at least for me and some of those who are closest to me, change in my life I will try, as succinctly as possible, to say what I mean by this and exactly how this is involved with the subject of the *bayān* on Nāṣir-i Khusrō ؒ.

Now the Shadhḍhulī Šūfī order is, as is well known, primarily a Sunni order whose teachings originate with Sayyidinā °Alī ؑ as do, in truth, the vast majority of all Šūfī orders with the exception of the Naqshbandī (who take Abu Bakr's ؓ teachings as their origin), the Oveyssi and, to a certain degree, the Tijanniya which has somewhat obscure beginnings as an “°Islām for the poor,” which reacted against the conservative, hierarchical Qadiriyyah brotherhood then dominant in much of the Muslim world, focusing on social reform and grass-roots Islamic revival, and whose founder Mawlanā Sidi Aḥmed Tijani ؒ announced that the Prophet ﷺ had authorised him in a daylight vision (*yaqadatan* = while awake) to establish his own order, The Tariqa Aḥmadiya-Muḥammadiya-Ibrahimiya-Hanifiya-Tijaniya. Whilst such happenings are not unheard of, there is always some degree of skepticism surrounding such self proclamation in which authority derives from the self of a šaykh rather than a recognised source such as Sayyidina °Alī ؑ or Abu Bakr ؓ etc.

Indeed Mawlanā Sidi Aḥmed Tijani ؒ told his students that the Prophet ﷺ told him that to take Šūfism directly from him – hence the name – and not use any of the chains of authority of teacher-to-disciple that were the main stay of all the Šūfī orders, saying:

“You owe no favour to any of the Shaykhs of the path, for I am myself your medium and provider in every truth. Abandon all that you have taken from all other tariqs and hold fast to this tariqa without seclusion (*kḥalwa*), or retirement from people (*uzla*), until you reach your promised *maqām*, and you are as you are, without hardship, difficulty, or strife, and abdicate all the saints. (*awliya-ullāh*)”

The Way of the Tijanīyyah was widely accepted almost immediately after its birth and Šaykh Tijanī ؒ became of such high respect that great masses of people began visiting him to take his wird and dhikr and to be affiliated with him through bay[°]ah. But still...

In any case, as I am a Ṣhādhdhulī Ṣhaykh with a Mālikī (مالكي) and Shāfi‘ī (شافعي) background, my own focus was on Sayyidinā ‘Alī ؑ, as the primary promulgator of the *comprehensive* teachings of the Prophet ﷺ as well as on the eponymous founder of the order, Ṣhaykh Abu-l-Ḥasan aṣḥ-Ṣhādhdhulī ﷺ and my own direct teacher, and source for my teaching authority, Ṣhaykh. ‘Ibrahim Baṭāwī ؑ.

All that changed when my Ṣhaykh ﷺ died a few years back, (Allāh ﷻ have mercy on him), when I was in my late sixties and once again confronted with the problem of having no living ṣhaykh even though I was functioning under his direct order as his Kḥalifah and a teaching ṣhaykh, again by his direct orders and in my own right.

That was when, considering the ramifications of that situation, I was hit head on with the full consequences of the meaning of “Whosoever dies without recognizing the ‘Imām ؑ of his time dies the death of ignorance (*jahiliyyah*),” for the ṣhaykh ﷺ, Allāh ﷻ have mercy on him, had never specifically told me who the ‘Imām ؑ was or where I could find him so what was I to do especially since I could no longer directly ask him about this matter of great concern?

Also around the same time I was intimately engaged in working with the North American Islamic Foundation, giving khutbahs in their masājid and helping organise events with them such as the annual Mawlid and the Day of ‘Āshūrā° (عاشوراء) and so forth.

In the course of helping in organising these events I also usually gave, along with other speakers, a *bayān* at each event. One year I was asked to speaking on the post-Karbalā° Message of Sayyidah Zaynab ؑ in the context of Ahlī Sunnah wa Jam‘ah.

Central to this bayān was a discussion of the talk she ؑ gave in Damascus condemning Yazīd specifically focusing on his treatment of ‘Imām al-Ḥusayn ؑ and the household of the Prophet ﷺ.

This, unfortunately, even though it was truthful and quoted her *exact* words, did not go over well with some of the members of NAIF as well as some of the *Ahl-i Sunnah wa Jam‘ah* attendees who felt that I was being disrespectful even though what I said was taken from the direct verbatim quotes of Sayyidah Zaynab ؑ herself.

The upshot of this was that I was dropped unceremoniously from all NAIF functions, though they never directly told me why, but I gather it was my due to my rather trenchant views on Mu‘āwaiyyah and Yazīd who they regarded as loyal companions of the Prophet ﷺ.

My immediate reponse was hurt and anger, as I had put a lot of effort over a five year period in helping to build up the community outreach programs of NAIF but, as many of these things turn out, it was a blessing – a blessing that marked, as it were, an end to what had been a long period of my life and the beginning of another.

What do I mean by this?

Many many years ago, when as a relatively new, naïve and, yes, fairly ignorant, Muslim studying in Egypt after three years of intense Arabic and Shari'ah studies in Makkah I first came across, in a meaningful way (rather than a more casual one), the Ḥadīth of the Event of the Cloak also known as the Ḥadīth of Mubahala.

This Ḥadīth of The Cloak (حديث الكساء/Ḥadīth al-Kisā°) refers to an account of an incident where the Prophet ﷺ gathered Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, °Alī and Fāṭimah ؑ under his cloak. This is mentioned in several *aḥadīth*, including Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim¹, where the Prophet ﷺ is quoted as using the phrase “Ahl al-Bayt” or “People of the House” from the second part of verse 33:33 of the Qur°ān; the verse called “°Āyat al-Taḥiir” or the “verse of purification” referring to those direct members of his family gathered with him under his cloak.

Somehow when I was really ready and able to read this *ḥadīth* with it's true meaning I was deeply struck and overcome with a great love of the Ahl al-Bayt ؑ. Immediately I also recalled that all of my teachers in authentic Ṣūfism had been members of that blessed family and that somehow I must be connected with the Ahl al-Bayt ؑ at the deepest level – the level of bay°ah.

Indeed this had been percolating for years through all of my studies, writings and work but now the time of percolation, so as to speak, was over and a new era had begun though I could only feel it in a somehow inchoate way and even though it was a bit misty and not quite clear, what was clear was that this *was* my way and immediately I felt a great sense of freedom and love at the same time.

1. A narration attributed to °A°isha ؓ reports: “that the Prophet ﷺ went out one morning wearing a striped cloak of black camel's hair and there came along Ḥasan b. 'Alī ؑ. He ﷺ wrapped him under it, then came Ḥusayn ؑ and he wrapped him under it along with the other one. Then came Fāṭimah ؑ and he ﷺ took her under it, then came °Alī ؑ and he ﷺ also took him under it and then said: Allāh only desires to take away any uncleanness from you, O people of the household, and purify you thoroughly.” (33:33) Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

I hope I am not taxing the patience of the reader or the listener but I need you to understand this point and it will be clear, ʾinshāllāh, shortly how it is deeply interconnected with Nāṣir al-Khusraw ❁.

So jump a number of years forward and I find myself, given: 1. the loss of my ṣhaykh, 2. then knowing that I do not know who is the ʾImām ❁ of this time and 3. my connection, deep love and attachment to Ahl al-Bayt ❁, and I find myself in the midst of my readings and studies coming across a poem by a great Persian mystic, poet, traveller and philosopher, Nāṣir-i Khusrō ❁.

In this poem, *The Confessional Ode or Qasidah ʾIʿtirāfī*, he is saying (and this is the translation. made with the help of some Persian friends, which is bound into the printed copy of my talk today):



“From every School I searched:

from Shafiite, Malikite, Hanafite and Hanbali

I sought a sign of guidance,

of the Chosen One of Allāh, the Almighty, the Guide;

and each one pointed me a different way,

one to China, one to Africa.

When I asked for a reason, or for corroboration from the Qurʾān,
they recoiled in helplessness, like blind men, like deaf men.

Then one day, I read in the Book the Verse of the Oath,

in which Allāh proclaims His Hand

is above all hands, and pondered on that group

who swore allegiance beneath the Tree

(like Jaʿfar, Miqdad, Salmān, al-Burāʾ)

I asked myself:

How is it now with that Tree and with that Hand?

Where shall I see that Hand, that group, that Oath?

I asked, but was rebuffed. They are no more

– so I was told –

The Tree, the Hand are gone,

the Assembly dispersed,

the Hand concealed and veiled in secrecy.

Those men were the Companions,

favoured by that allegiance

and chosen to be with the Prophet in Paradise.

Nasir al-Khusro ❁

Imagine the deep sadness that rose in my being from reading.



They are no more

– so I was told –

The Tree, the Hand,

all are gone,

the Assembly dispersed,

the Hand concealed and veiled in secrecy.



Of course I knew that what he said was only partially true for I had found both the Hand and the Tree in my life but, even after having found them, still all was gone, my life was reaching an end and as yet I did not know who was the ʾImām ❁ of my time.

To understand this you must understand the meaning of authority.

Yes of course there are perhaps thousands of *shuyukh* scattered around the world; there are ʿulema and fuqaha and ʿawliyāʾ and ʿarifīn, but ask yourself dear listener or dear reader, who of all of these truly knows the ʾImām ❁ of our Time?

A friend of mine recently told me he was going to attend a “conference” at which many of the eminent *shuyukh* of this time were to be present including some whom I usually refer to as the “rock n’roll *shuyukh*, by whom I mean those who always fly first class, sleep in five star hotels (even if one them wears a shiny suit that is a bit too small and a scruffy *kufi*). charge 5000 dollars for the blessings of their exalted presence, manage to have two or three security ‘men’ clustered around them, and can even get you into the Masjid of the Prophet ❁ when the doors are closed after Ṣalāt al-ʿIshāʾ.

Anyway I asked my friend to politely go around and try to speak on a one-on-one basis with these *illuminati* and ask them if they know who the ʾImām ❁ of the Age is — and if they didn’t know then they were as ignorant as both my friend and I, despite having flown first class across many miles to a secure sleep in the five stars deeps.

So – as to the point above – they have no *real* authority.

Real authority remains with the person, being asked the question, again politely and directly and with no witnesses about, really knows by direct knowledge, who the ʾImām ❁ of this time is.

Real authority has nothing to do with blood, lineage, tribe, madhāb, tariqah etc. It has to do with knowing or not knowing. Period.

And this is, at least I imagine, what or who Nāṣir-i Khusraw ❁ was in search of when he took to the road exactly 968 years ago today.

His journey was certainly not a first class five star one. As he writes:

Many a night I made a stone my pillow, the clouds my tent.

I sank as low as a fish,

I ascended as high as the stars above the hills;

now in a land where water was frozen as marble,

now in a land where the very dust was hot as a spark,

I roamed. now on the sea, now on the high plateau
or trackless waste, across mountains, sand and streams,

up and down the precipices,

a coil of rope round my shoulder like a camel driver,

pack on my back like a mule,

inquiring I went my way, searching from city to city,

shore to shore.



The story of his journey, the *Safarnāma* or *Safarnāmē* (سفرنامه), which resembles a travelogue is recorded from notes that he took during the course of his seven-year journey and, as we have written, was compiled in a later period of his life.

It is not really my intention to spend a long time writing about the *Safarnāma* as there are a number of books of that subject and, indeed, it is available to download, albeit in Urdu, from the net.

In it he recalls his visits to dozens of cities over a seven year period (1046, March 6 – 1052, October 23) and writes comprehensively about those cities including the holy cities of ʾIslām, in which he includes details about schools, caravanserais, fortifications, masājīd, water supplies, scientists, kings, the public, population, the area of the cities, and, of course, his interesting memories. Amazingly after almost a 1000 years, his *Safarnāma* is still popular, readable for Persian speakers, and taught in schools all over modern day Iran.

He also wrote a book on mathematics which has ‘disappeared’ as well as the *Zaad al-Musafirin* (or Travelling Provisions of Pilgrims) and the *Wajh-i-Din* (or The Face of Religion) which are theoretical descriptions of religious and philosophical principles and *Gushāyish wa Rahāyish* (گشایش و رهایش) which is a philosophical work translated into English by F.M. Hunzai under the title: *Knowledge and Liberation* which discusses creation, questions related to the soul, epistemology, and Fāṭimiyyūn doctrines.

Also available is The Reconciliation of the two Wisdoms (*Jāmī al-Hikmatayn*) as well as, in a somewhat lower key, his *Rawshāna-ināma* or Book of Enlightenment (روشنایی نامه), also known as *Shīsh Fasl*), and the *Saʿdatnamā* or Book of Felicity. The former is divided into two sections: the first, of a metaphysical character, contains a sort of practical cosmography, chiefly based on Ibn Sinā's theories, but frequently intermixed both with the freer speculations of the well-known philosophical brotherhood of Basra, the *ʾIkhwān aṣ-Ṣafā* (اخوان الصفا) and purely Shīʿah and pre-Alamūti Ismāʿīlī ideas; the second, or ethical section of the poem, abounds in moral maxims and ingenious thoughts on man's good and bad qualities, on the necessity of shunning the company of fools and double-faced friends, on the deceptive allurements of the world and the secret snares of ambitious men craving for rank and wealth. It concludes with an imaginary vision of a beautiful work of spirits who have stripped off the fetters of earthly cares and sorrows and revel in the pure light of divine wisdom and love.

In general I will not be referring except in passing to any of these works but will pay more attention to another work of his, the *Dīwān* (دیوان), composed in his later days which contains most of his lyrical poems. The chief topics of these are enthusiastic praise of ʿAlī ۞, his descendants ۞ in particular the 8th Fāṭimī ʾImam, al-Mustansir bi-llāh ۞ whom he actually met in Cairo, and whose period of reign lasted for 60 years, the longest of all the *khulafah*, either in Egypt or elsewhere in other Islamic states, and his *bāb* (the direct teacher of Naṣir al-Khusraw ۞) Muʿayyad fī-d-Dīn al-Shīrazī ۞, who was the *Daʿī al-Mutlaq* or the unrestricted caller/الداعي المطلق, under the Fāṭimī ʾImām, as well as The Gate of Gates (*Bāb al-Abwāb*/باب الابواب) and Chief Caller (*Dāʿī ad-Duʿāt*/الداعي الداعات).

In his theological and philosophical writings he brought the Fāṭimī spiritual heritage to its pinnacle. In this position, he worked inside the House of Knowledge (*Dar al-ʿIlm*/دار العلم) teaching missionaries (*duʿah*) from both inside and outside the Fāṭimid lands and composing his theological works until the end of his life in 1078 CE.

The *Diwān* also contains passionate outcries against the duplicities and deceptions of Khorāsān (خراسان) and its rulers, who had driven him from his home, and his deep despondency in seeing himself despised by his former associates and excluded, ostracized and anathematized as an exile and forbidden from all participation in the interplay of scholars and teachers.

Scattered through all his alternating outbursts of hope and despair, there are lessons of morality, and solemn warnings against the tricks and perfidy of the world, against the vanity of all earthly splendor and greatness, against the folly and injustice of men, and the hypocrisy, frivolity and viciousness of fashionable society and that of princely courts in particular.

The *Diwān* also includes many lyrical and beautiful passages exploring his love of the quiet solitude of his final place of exile and place of burial in Yamgan, Badakshān, where he taught under the protection of its ruler in the last years of his life and brought many people to an understanding of the teachings of the Fāṭimids as conveyed to him by his teacher Muʿayyad fī-d-Dīn ash-Shīrāzi ❁.

I first came into contact with the *Diwān* in the edition of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy translated by Gholam Reza Aavani and Peter Lamborn Wilson (aka Hakim Bey) when the latter was a student of Seyyed Hossein Nāṣir in the late 60's and early 70's of the last century.

This marked the first time I read a (somewhat truncated and edited) version of the *Qasidah ʿIṭirāfī* or the Confessional Ode of Naṣir al-Khusrō ❁. At the time I must confess it more or less went in one eye and out the other but one phrase really registered deeply where, in speaking of his shaykh, he writes:



I stood before you, pale and skeletal
clad in a woolen cloak
and kissed your hand
as if it were the grave of the Prophet

or

The Black Stone of the Kaʿaba



At the time I was studying at the *Markaz al-Lughat al-ʿArabiyyah* in Makkah (per force a very Saʿudi institution) and for some reason the library had ordered a copy of this book and, starved for anything remotely ṣūfī, I had borrowed the above book from the library. At the time I admit I was a bit shocked by what Naṣir al-Khusrō ❁ had written as, though I had a shaykh he had advised me to study ʿIslām first and Ṣūfism later and, though I loved the shaykh, I could not really imagine, at that time, kissing his hand as if it were the Grave of the Prophet ❁ much less the Black Stone.

The latter especially so, given I was living in Makkah at the time and praying most of my prayers in the Ḥaram and was a daily witness to the thousands of people from every country and every color and every station in life kissing that stone in such rapt manner.

In any case that was my very first introduction to the *Diwān* of Naṣir al-Kḥusrō ۞.

The other thing I remember that stuck with me was from the introduction by Peter Lamborn Wilson where he wrote:

“Most, probably all of the *Diwān* was written after Naṣir al-Kḥusrō’s wanderings had ceased, after his search for wisdom amongst all sects² had culminated in his meeting in Cairo with the Fāṭimī °Imām [and] after his mission to Khorasan had ended in exile in Yamgan. It is the poetry of an old man, only in his best moods reconciled to the life of an exile, a hermit – a man who has precisely failed, at least outwardly, to ‘mould the world closer to his heart’s desire’. When he cautions the Fāṭimī missionaries³, warning them that society at large will reward their preaching only with violence, he obviously speaks from direct experience. The golden court of the Fāṭimid Kḥalif was like a dream in his bleak valley...and not to be found in the world which actively persecuted him and rejected his teachings and ultimate mission.”

Now in my mid-seventies I realise the portents of that passage and why it stuck with me, having been faced for my words by a rifle wielding Takfirī intent on killing me and my family, having come literally within inches of being stabbed in the back leading prayers in a prison where I served as a chaplain, and having been asked not to return to many masājid because of what I say in my kḥutbahs which does no fit in with the views of the mainly misogynist literal-legal custodians of the ex post facto prophecy of the 4th hijri century.

2. More on this later.

3. *dāʿī* (داعي, plural *duʿāh/duʿāt* دعاء) A *dāʿī* in Sunni °Islām is a person who invites people to understand °Islām through dialogue, not unlike the °Islāmic equivalent of a missionary inviting people to the faith, prayer and manner of °Islāmic life. In Fāṭimī °Islām a *dāʿī* is a representative (on varying levels) of the °Imām who was represented at the peak of the hierarchy by twelve *ḥujaj* (proofs) in different regions, and under them, a hierarchy of missionaries (*duʿāh* or *duʿāt*) conducted the tasks of initiation and instruction into Fāṭimī teachings. Following his studies with his ṣhaykh in Cairo Naṣir al-Kḥusrō ۞ was appointed by the °Imām of his time as the *ḥujja* and chief *dāʿī* to the “island” (*jazīrah*) (as territories were called) of Kḥurasān.

In any case to follow along with our fourth century hijri traveller, who was to become, as a result of the Infinite Grace of Allāh ﷻ and his studies with al-Mu'ayyad ﷺ and the 'Imām ﷺ, a living, loving, life giving proponent of direct insight into prophecy.⁴

He and his brother and their servant left from Balkh for Nishapur on the fifth of March in the year 1046 of the Common Era corresponding to the 23rd day of Sha'bān in the year 437 of the Hijri calendar two and a half months after the visionary dream (*ru'yāh*/رؤية) of the man who upbraided him for wasting his life and pointed out to him the qiblah asking how long he will concern himself with earthly blessings for his body instead of the blessing of knowledge for his soul.

They arrived in Nishapur at the time of a lunar eclipse six weeks later on Shawwal 11 or the 21st of April.

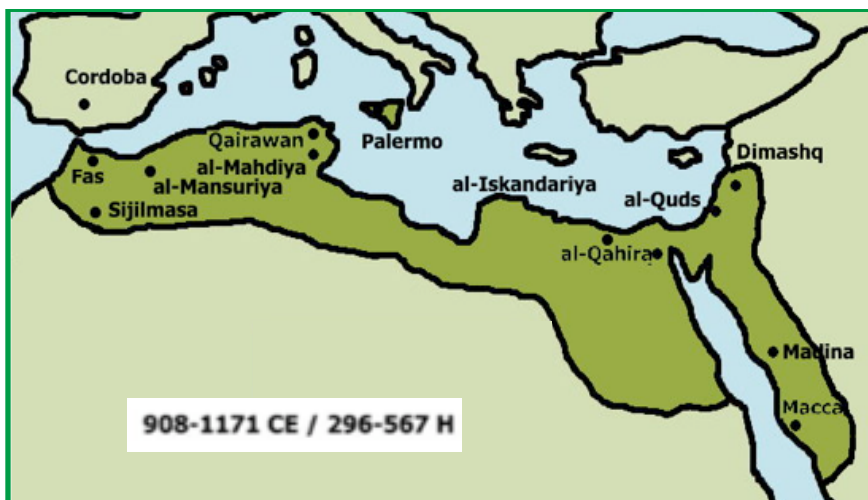
His spiritual quest at that point was to find the most perfect being in the world. He then set off for Makkah and traveled by the way of Shaburqan to Merv, then proceeded to Nishapur and visited the tomb of the great walī, Bāyazīd of Bisṭāmī (بایزید بسطامی) at Qums, and then went by way of Demghan to Samnan, where he met Ustad 'Alī Nisai, a pupil of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and lecturer on Arithmetic, Geometry and Medicine. Passing onwards through Qazwin he reached Tabriz on Safar 20th, 438 A.H./1046 CE. and there he made the acquaintance of the poet Qatran, to whom he explained passages in poems of Daqiqi and Maujik. Then he made his way successively to Van, Akhiat, Bittis, Arzan, Mayfaraqin, Amid, Aleppo, and Ma'arratun Nu'man, where he met the great Arabic philosophical poet Abul Ala-af Ma'arri of whose character and attainment he speaks in warmest terms. Then he visited Hama, Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon, Tyre, Acre, and Haifa. He spent sometime in Syria (*Shām*/بلاد الشام) in visiting the tombs of Prophets and other holy places, including al-Quds (Jerusalem) where he arrived at the beginning of Ramaḍān and stayed three months during which time he also visited Bayt Laḥm (بيت لحم)/Bethlehem) and al-Khalīl (الخليل/Hebron) and then he made his first pilgrimage to Makkah in 1047 leaving right after the Days of 'Arafah from where he went, by the way of Damascus, to al-Quds (Jerusalem) where he spent another month. He then proceeded by land to Egypt and finally arrived in Cairo on Safar 7th, 439 Hijri /1047 CE. where his arrival marked the end of his beginnings.

4. As I pray I have, having followed much the same path as he did.

Before going on to that most important meeting I should say that when you read his *Safarnāma* (سفرنامه) one of the things that strikes you are his very detailed observations of the civil, architectural, military and especially the water works of each place he visits. A mystic he was yet at the same time a man intensely imbued with the gift of observation of the actual physical surroundings through which he moved.

For instance, he is on the road moving south through the mountains, past a spring which he notes “only flows three days a year”, continuing on until he and his brother and the servant are pulled up short and stand amazed by a field so completely ‘covered with narcissi in bloom’ that ‘the entire place looked white because of all the flowers’. As Alice C. Hunsberger writes in her very informative book on Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﴿﴾, *The Ruby of Badakhshan*, “Here is our bureaucrat, engineer, philosopher, poet and exile of later times, steeped in wonder by a thousand tiny flowers.” Or, when he reaches the outskirts of Tripoli, he talks about “lots of sugar cane and many groves of mangoes, oranges, bananas, lemons and dates,” and then goes on to talk about the city itself which he reckons to about 1,000 cubits square (one cubit = 45.72 centimeters) in area, home to some 20,000 people” and buildings “generally four or five stories high, with some as high as six stories,” remarking that “every type of food, fruit and edible I ever saw in Persia was to be found there, but a hundred times more plentiful.” In Beirut he mentions a “stone arch so high that the road ran right through it,” and, “I estimated the arch to be fifty ells high (one ell = a cubit (above), and on all sides were slabs of white stone each of which weighed at least a thousand maunds (= 82.28 lbs). This edifice was made up of bricks up to a height of twenty ells, and on top were set up marble cylinders, each eight ells high and so thick that two men (presumably he and his brother) could scarcely reach around.” This from the man who also wrote, “very often I had to spend nights sleeping on hard stones with no roof or cover above my head save the clouds...now carrying my belongings on my back as a beast of burden, by hills, and sandy deserts, across streams and precipices, wandering from town to town making enquiries, wandering in search of truth, asking “From Persian, Arab, Hindu, Turk and Jew, from the folk of Sind, from the Romans, from everyone I met, the Philosopher, Manichee, Sabaeen, Atheist, I asked, I questioned, I pestered...” Until, as we have said, he, at last, arrived at the end of his beginnings.

The Lands of the Fāṭimid Kḫalifate and its capital in al-Qāhirah



Then one day I reached those city gates where angels are servants,
where planets and stars are slaves,
a garden of roses and pines girded round with walls
of emerald and jasper trees,
set in a desert of gold-embroidered silk,
its springs sweet as honey, the river of paradise:
a city which only Virtue can aspire to reach,
a city whose cypresses are like the blades of Intellect,
a city whose sages wear brocaded robes woven of silk.
And here, before these gates, my Reason spoke:
Here, within these walls,
find what you seek and do not leave without it.
So I approached the Guardian of the Gate,
and told him of my search.
Rejoice! he answered.
“Your mine has produced a jewel,
for beneath this land of Truth
there flows a crystal ocean of precious pearls and pure clear water.
This is the lofty sphere
of exalted stars;
aye, it is paradise itself,...

This is how one contemporary Afghan writer describes what happened, “His stay in Cairo marks an epoch in his life, for here he became acquainted with the splendor, justice and wise administration of the 8th Fāṭimid Kḫalifā and °Imām °Abū Tamīm Ma°add al-Mustanṣir bi-Ilāh (المستنصر), who was born in al-Qāhīrah (Cairo) on 16th Jumada II, 420 AH and eight months afterwards was declared to succeed his father. His name was Ma°ad Abu Tamīm, surnamed al-Mustanṣir bil-Lah “The Asker Of Victory From Allāh”. He ascended to the Kḫilāfah on 15th Shaban, 427/June 13, 1036 at the age of 6. After his death, the succession was heavily disputed. This dispute resulted in the split into two branches, lasting to this day, the Nizari and the Musta°alī.

Nāṣir-i Kḫusrō ﷺ in his *Safarnāma* has described the city of al-Qāhīrah, the excellent administration of the Fāṭimid °Imāms and Kḫulafah, the wealth, contentment and security of their subjects. His description of al-Qāhīrah, its masājīd, its gardens, buildings and suburbs is admirable.

The details of Fāṭimid administration given by him are most valuable. He was much impressed with the discipline of the army and the maintenance of law, peace and order in the country. Describing the excellent administration in beautiful words, he says, “It seems that the Fāṭimids are the only lawful authorities and the protectors of the garden of Allāh ﷻ.”

Most importantly it was in al-Qāhīrah that Nāṣir-i Kḫusrō ﷺ was initiated into the esoteric doctrine of the Fāṭimiyyun and received the commission to carry on their call. During this period, Muslims were ruled by pre-Alāmūt °Ismā°ilī (الإسماعيلية) °Imāms who were also the Caliphs of the Islamic Empire and this was the period in which al-°Azhar (الأزهر) the world’s oldest University was founded.

According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, Nāṣir-i Kḫusrō ﷺ left Persia at a very difficult period, when the country was being laid waste by the continued wars between various Princes. He found the same wretched picture in all the Muslim countries which he traversed on his journey. Only Miṣr (Ægypt) proved a pleasing exception, where he saw prosperity, rich bazars, harmony and tranquility. As the Ismaili dynasty of Fatimids were ruling in Miṣr at that time, Nāṣir ﷺ concluded that Islam had diverged from the true path and that only the Fāṭimiyyūn could save the true believers (*al-mu°minūn*/المؤمنون) from inevitable ruin. (n.b. - think of the Muslim world today)

When Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﷺ visited Cairo in 439 A.H., he went to visit the ʾImām al-Mustansir Billah ﷺ where he met Muʾayyad fī-d-Dīn ﷺ, who was then one of the twelve ‘*Hujjāt*’ (الحجج) of the ʾImām, and he began to question Kḥawajah Muʾayyad heavily, as he writes:

“And I began to ask him

of the things that were first and those that will last,
of the cause of the order of the world
which is the basis of things as they are.

Of what is *genus* and the way in which species are formed.

I asked about the All-powerful, predestination and faith,
Both of which are never inseparable from each other.

But how should one be given precedence over the others?

I asked him of the mechanism of the palpitation of day and night
– how from these –

the beggar becomes rich, and the darkness becomes lit?

I asked about the Prophets and their contradictory messages
Of the reason for the prohibition of drinking blood
or intoxicating wine.

Then I inquired as to the foundation of the *shariʿah*,
And why five prayers have been prescribed.

I asked about the fast that the Prophet ordered to be observed
during the ninth month of the year,

Why should *zakat* be different for silver and gold coins,
Why a fifth on booty and a tithe on irrigated land?
Why should this be one fifth and that one tenth?

Why the brother takes one share while the sister only half?
I also asked about the cause

of the uneven distribution of happiness:

Why does it often happen that a worshipper is aggrieved
while the oppressor is happy?

Or why one pious man is unhappy while another is happy?
Why one unbeliever enjoys his life
while another is dissatisfied?

Why one is born of solid health and good looking
while the other is blind or of weak health from birth?

But yet Allāh always acts in perfect justice

– then –

reason cannot be satisfied by what it, in its imperfection, sees.

Nasir al-Khusro ❁

I say that it is day but you say it is night.

I asked you to prove your contentions
but you in reply you draw your dagger.

You say that at a certain place
there is a sacred stone
and all who perform a pilgrimage to it become free from sin.
And I say.

Azar, the Father of the Prophet ʾIbrahīm
preached the religion of idolatry
and you preach the worship of a stone.
Truly you are the same to me as Azar.”



Then “He changed my night into a shiny day by his arguments
which were like the sun. He showed me both the worlds in my person
and made me behold them openly as well as secretly, in my self.”

That sage then set his hand upon his heart
(a hundred blessings be on that hand and heart!)

And said, I offer you the remedy of proof and demonstration;
but if you accept,

I shall place a seal upon your lips which must never be broken.

I gave my consent and he affixed the seal.

Drop by drop and day by day he fed me the healing potion,
till my ailment disappeared,

my tongue became imbued with eloquent speech;
my face, which had been pale as saffron now grew rosy with joy;

I who had been a stone was now a ruby;

I had been dust – now I was ambergris.



If that was the end of his beginning what followed was the beginning of his end.

Thus Nāṣir-i Khusrō ❁ spent three or five years in the service of Imām ❁ and was appointed to the propagation of the Daʿwah in Khusrāsān (خراسان). He was given the title of Ḥujjāt-i Khusrāsān and he became one of the twelve Ḥujjāt of the office of the ʾImām ❁.

During this same time he performed the Ḥajj three more times, each time returning to study with Muʿayyad ❁, with whom he undertook vast studies into the two levels of Ḥikmah (wisdom/حكمة).

As it is classically taught, Hikmah is of two types: that which is related to knowledge, and that which is related to action. So, that which is related to knowledge is to realize the essence of things, and to understand the connection between cause and effect – in regards to the Creation, occurrence of events, fate, and legislation. As for the action-based Hikmah, put simply it is to put things in their proper places.

Action-based Hikmah operates on three levels:

- 1) that you give everything its right and do not exceed the limits in this, and that you do not rush it before or delay it past its proper time;
- 2) that you realize the intent of Allāh ﷻ in His Promise, realize His Justice in His Decision, as well as His Grace in preventing you from something. And from that which defines this level is that which has been said by the people of firmness and Sunnah: Hikmah consists of the lofty and praiseworthy goals that are necessitated by his Creating and Commanding, for which He Commanded, and for which He Predestined;
- 3) that you reach the highest levels of knowledge when making deductions and coming to conclusions, and it is the insight (كشف), the knowledge of which is to the heart like something which is being looked at to the eyes that are looking at it (i.e., in confirming that the organ is functioning properly). And this is the exclusive and highest level that the scholars can reach.”

This is a view, as it were, from the outside in and can describe both Sunni and Shī‘ah general means of the transmission of the Wisdom (Hikmah) teachings, but the Fāṭimīyyun (الفاطميون) methodology was very different in many ways and was basically organised around the idea of the various levels of the *dā‘i* or caller.

The organization and functioning of the Fāṭimīyyun *da‘wah* is a secret, closely guarded and hard to find. There are only limited resources available on this subject and information is very sparse regarding the *da‘wah* activities of the Fāṭimid *dawla* in Iraq, Persia, Central Asia and India where the *du‘at* fearful of persecution were continually obliged to observe *taqiyya* and secrecy in their work. All this once again explains why Fāṭimīyyun literature is generally so poor in historiographical details on the activities of the *du‘at* – information that in Fāṭimid times may been available only to the central headquarters headed by the person of the ʿImām ﷺ himself.

Contemporary scholarship and post-Alamūt°Ismā'īlī studies, which draw on a variety of sources including various histories of Ægypt, has somewhat succeeded in piecing together a relatively reliable sketch of the Fāṭimid *da'wah* which has much of its basis in the figure of the *dā'i* and various levels and strictly defined degrees.

The *dā'i* (داعي), which literally means a summoner or a caller is, as we have mentioned, a term for missionary in various Sunni Muslim groups, but has a special use among the Fāṭimī where the *dā'i* was not a “missionary” as he generally is considered in the Sunni sense.

The *dā'i* was the one responsible for the conversion of his student as well as the mental and spiritual well being of the student and, more than that, the *dā'i* was a guide and pointer to the light of the °Imām. The teacher-student relationship of the *dā'i* and his student (*murīd*) was much like the one that would develop in Sufism. The student desired Allāh ﴿ﷻ﴾, and the *dā'i* could bring him (or her) to Allāh ﴿ﷻ﴾ though a multi-layered process in which he (or she) was led to recognize the true stature and light of the °Imām ﴿ﷺ﴾, then the Prophet ﴿ﷺ﴾ and in turn Allāh ﴿ﷻ﴾. The *dā'i* was the path to the face (*wajh*/وجه) of Allāh ﴿ﷻ﴾ – the goal which is the Truth.

When I write/say, “the true stature and light” I do so mindful of Ibn °Arabī's observation that one may see a long line (صَفْء/سaff) of people actively engaged in comunal prayer (*ṣalāt*/صلاة) all of whom are “addressing” Allāh ﴿ﷻ﴾ but in reality, the “Allāh” they are addressing may be as different as the number of people standing in the line. The question then is which or ‘who’ is the real Allāh ﴿ﷻ﴾?

And given that question, who is it who can teach you or, more importantly, show you the real Allāh ﴿ﷻ﴾? This of course is the basis of the whole journey of Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﴿ﷺ﴾ and what led him to question al-Mu'ayyad fī-d-Dīn ﴿ﷺ﴾, who was a *dā'i* of the highest level in the following manner:

“And I began to ask him
of the things that were first and those that will last,
of the cause of the order of the world
which is the basis of things as they are.”

which indicates the urgency behind the statement, “Who does not know the °Imām of his time dies in *jahillyyah* (ignorance).”

This life is very short – it takes place in the time it takes to rest underneath a tree and then move on. Eternity is just that...endless.

Before we look at the levels and degrees of the *du'ah* from the top down let us look at how they worked from the bottom up.

In the first place the *du'ah* (pl of *dā'ī*) are mainly unknown, purposefully so given the violence and abuse to which they are often subject. Accordingly they observe the well-know maxim, "Those who know don't show – those who show don't know." Here, then, is how they work (in short hand) from the bottom up.

Let us start at a normal everyday neighborhood masjid. After a while in attending such a masjid one gets to know the "regulars" and from among the "regulars" one sees that there is this one or that who seem to want to know "more".

Of course the wahabi/salafis/takfiris are also on the job making similar assessments and, with the wealth of their supporters behind them, seek to seduce such people with anything from "sunnah" clothes or hijāb or a complimentary trip to Makkah to make ʿumrah or even Ḥajj or maybe even a year at university in the Kingdom etc. Such blandishments work, and after spending in excess of \$70 some odd billion⁵ on such practices they have been quite *successful* in various dimensions but, alḥamdulillāh, there are some who see through this, or some who have tasted the fruit and and have found it bitter, continue to seek to find the truth along other paths.

The *dā'ī* is trained to observe this and at some point makes contact with the 'seeker' with whom he enters into dialogue, and in the process of that dialogue manages to slip in a few ideas that, most likely, may be somewhat strange but are thought provoking.

This may take place a number of times to the point where the "seeker" wants to know more and is introduced to the next level of *dā'ī* who is more knowledgeable and has been "working" in the fields for a longer period of time. This brother is not only able to answer questions more thoroughly but also begins to pose a deeper level of questioning, understanding and insight.

5. Saudi Arabia has reportedly spent over \$70 billion since 1979 on overseas aid, more than two-thirds of it on its campaign to spread Wahhabism across the world. This programme included the founding of thousands of mosques and madrassas (Islamic schools) as well as Islamic centres that have served as support networks for Wahhabi ideology and for Jihadi movements. Funding for the Afghan Jihad was part of this wider campaign, and Saudi charities have funded radical groups and movements as well as educational and social welfare activities across Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, the former Soviet Union and the West.

I do not have time to go more deeply into this but a few things might shed some light: For instance, what really is the difference between Deobandi and Barelvi Muslims and why is you can pray behind some but not others, marry some but not others, or why are the rules of divorce in Hanafi ʿIslām so different that in Shāfiʿi ʿIslām or why do the rulings regarding interest (*ribā*/ربا) so differ in different schools of ʿIslām when Allāh ﷻ is so explicit in Qurʾān?

The first one is in Sūrah al-Baqarah verse no.275

“Those who devour usury will not stand except as stands one whom the Satan by his touch has driven to madness. That is because they say, “trade is like usury”, but Allāh has permitted trade and has forbidden usury”,

In the next verse verse 276 in the same place he says,

“Allāh will deprive usury of all blessing, and will give increase for deeds of charity, for he does not love any ungrateful sinner.”

Two verses later in verse 278 he says,

“Oh you who believe! Fear Allah and give up what remains of your demand for usury if you are indeed believers.”

In verse 279 he says, “If you do not, take notice of war from Allāh and his Messenger...”

In the second place in Sūrah ʿĀl-ʿImrān, verse 130 Allāh ﷻ says,

“Oh you who believe! Devour not usury doubled and multiplied; but fear Allāh that you may prosper.”

In the third place in Sūrah an-Nisāʾ Allāh ﷻ states in verse 161,

“That they took usury though they were forbidden and they devoured peoples wealth wrongfully; we have prepared for those amongst them who reject faith a grievous chastisement.”

And yet when you ask most of the “regulars” in the masjid you will find most of them only own their cars on the basis of interest (*ribā*/ربا) and, worse, only ‘own’ their homes on the basis of *ribā*, and routinely have 5 or 6 credit cards many of which are maxed out.

Or questions such as why do men routinely disregard the need to cover their ʿAwrah (even in prayer) and dress like Muslims even in the masājid but expect women to always do so when the majority of Muslim scholars define that the limits of the ʿAwrah of a man are what is between navel and knee. Aḥmad, ʿAbū Dawūd, and al-Daruqutnī reported with a good chain that the Prophet ﷺ said: “What is between navel and knee is ʿAwrah (العورة)”.

Note that the examples I have used are very outer or *dhāhiri* (ظاهري) ones just to try to make the process clear to people who may have never been introduced to this process.

Here I will provide a more *bāṭinī* (باطني) or esoteric example of how a question might be answered.

All Muslims are familiar with the phrase in the opening Sūrah of the Qurʾān, al-Fatīhāh – “*aṣ-ṣirāṭu-l-mustaqīm*” (الصراط المستقيم) or “the straight path” which might be thought to be a fairly simple matter to understand. But what exactly is meant by the straight path? Here is part of an answer from one of the later works (*Gushayish wa Rahāyish*) of Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﷺ.

“Oh brother you asked: “What is the straight path?” It is a bridge stretched over the Fire that is thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword and all the people who live will have to cross over it. The fortunate ones cross it and reach the Garden the unfortunate fall into the Fire. Know also it has an inner and outer reality.

There is a path that the people walk upon the surface of the earth and another which is the path which people follow with their souls. Had there been only the “straight path” that was stretched over the Fire, Allāh ﷻ would not have commanded us to say, “Guide us to the “straight path” meaning that there is another path that is not straight but crooked and evil. Thus it is established that the path is not a path for the body alone but a path for the soul. The straight path is the way of those to whom Allāh ﷻ has extended His Favors, the Prophets (*nabiyyin*), the Truthful (*ṣiddiqīn*), the Witnesses (*shuhadaʾ*) and the Righteous (*ṣāliḥīn*). As Allāh ﷻ says, “All those who obey Allāh and the Messenger are in the company of those on whom Allāh has bestowed His Favors. (4:69). The Messengers are those who convey the News to the people of the world. By the Truthful He means those who expound the *taʾwīl* (inner meaning) of the *sharīʿah* (outer law). The witnesses are the true ʾImāms ﷺ who are the witnesses of Allāh ﷻ to the people and “the righteous” are the Proofs (*hujjah*) among the people because the betterment of people’s souls is due to them.”

He then speaks about people who claim for themselves more than what is theirs. as well as those who claim a lower place for themselves than what is theirs. One falls off the left hand side of the path and the other falls off the right hand side. Whoever says that he does not need to learn and secretly believes he knows more and who-soever claims that he knows more but knows less – both have fallen.”

Such questions (and many more like them) are often the first step that a person takes in trying to really understand ʾIslām and what is expected of them as Muslims. This very first step is what the *dāʿi* seeks to bring about with the aim, as we have said through a process of unveiling and understanding, of causing fellow Muslims to recognize the true stature and light of the ʾImām ﷺ⁶, then the Prophet ﷺ and in turn Allāh ﷻ.

Hopefully this provides some idea of who and what a *dāʿi* is. What then of the levels of the various *duʿat* (pl. of *dāʿi*)?

I will start with the highest levels in the *daʿwah* (دعوة) or the organisation of *duʿat* and proceed to the first level.

ad-Dāʿi al-muṭlaq (الداعي المطلق) literally means “the absolute or unrestricted caller who are those in touch with the ʾImām and work directly under his leadership. They are organizationally often referred to as *dāʿi ad-duʿat* or the chief caller of the callers.

Next we have *ad-dāʿī al-mahdūd* (or *al-mahsur*) a rank in the Fāṭimī *daʿwah* for the chief assistant to *ad-Dāʿi al-muṭlaq*.

Hujja (sometimes referred to as the *bāb*=gate or door) is a Qurʾānic term meaning both “proof” and “presentation of proof.” In the ʾIsmāʿīlī *daʿwah* of the pre-Fāṭimid and Fāṭimid periods, it was also applied to senior *ad-duʿat* and in ʾIsmāʿīlī history it came to be applied to those representing the ʾImām.

For purposes of the ‘mission’, the world was divided into twelve parts, each being called *jazīrah* (usually translated as an island/جزيرة), known as the islands of the earth (*al-juzur min al-ʾarad*/الجزر من الأرض). It is difficult to say whether *jazīrah* really meant an island. One can broadly agree with W. Ivanow when he says: “It appears that in this sense *jazīrah* does not mean ‘island’, as it usually means, but is taken here in its more basic sense, from the root *j-z-r* = to cut off, and therefore means a slice, cutting, or a part, a section. “Therefore the expression ‘12 *juzur*’ should be translated as the 12 sections of the world population. They are: Arabs, Turks, Berbers, Negroes, Abyssinians, Khazras, China, Daylam, Rum and Saqaliba. Thus this classification is partly based on geographical, and partly on ethnographical principle, and plainly belongs to the fourth/tenth century.” (vide *The Rise of the Fatimids*, Calcutta, 1942, p. 21)

6. those who may not be aware of what I mean when I speak of the ʾImām ﷺ and think I am talking about Sunni and Shiʿāh thought differences and understandings should read our bayān, “*The Bayʿah is for Allāh* ﷻ”

Each *jazīrah* was placed under the overall charge of a high ranking *dā'ī* known specifically as *hujja* (proof, guarantor), also called *naqib*, *lahiq* or *yad* (hand) in early Fāṭimid times. The *hujjah* was the highest representative of the *da'wah* in any "island", and he was assisted by a number of subordinate *du'ah* of different ranks operating in the localities under his jurisdiction. These included, as we have mentioned, *dā'ī al-balagh*, *dā'ī al-mutlaq*, and *dā'ī al-mahdud* (or *al-mahsur*). There may have been as many as thirty such *du'ah* in some islands (*jaza'ir*). The particular responsibilities of different *du'ah* are not clarified in the meagre sources. It seems, however, that *dā'ī al-mutlaq* acted as liaison between the central *da'wah* headquarters in al-Qāhirah and the Hujjah's headquarters in his *jazīrah*, and *al-dā'ī al-mutlaq* evidently became the chief functionary of the *da'wah*, operating with absolute authority in the absence of the *hujjah* and his *dā'ī al-mutlaq*. The regional *du'ah*, in turn, had their assistants, entitled *al-ma'dhun*, the licentiate. The sources mention at least two categories of this rank, namely, *al-ma'dhun al-mutlaq*, and *al-ma'dhun al-mahdud* (or *al-mahsūr*), eventually called *al-mukasir* (literally = breaker). The *al-ma'dhun al-mutlaq* often became a *dā'ī* himself; he was authorised as the chief licentiate to administer the oath of initiation and explain the rules and policies of the *da'wah* to the initiates, while the *mukasir* was mainly responsible for attracting prospective converts and breaking their attachments to other religions or sects. The ordinary Fāṭimī initiates, the *mustajibs* or respondents who called themselves as *ʿawliyāʿ Allāh* or "friends of Allāh ۞", did not, strictly speaking, occupy a rank (*hadd*) of the *da'wah* hierarchy but belonged to the *ahl al-da'wah* (people of the mission) and represented the elite, the *khāṣṣ* (خاص), as compared to the common Muslims, designated as the *ammāt al-Muslimīn* or the *ʿawamm* (العوام). The ranks or levels of the Fāṭimid *da'wah*, numbered to seven from the *bāb* (or *dā'ī ad-du'at*) to the *mukasir*, together with their idealised functions and their corresponding celestial hierarchy, are elaborated by the *dā'ī* al-Kirmanī, one of the most important *du'ah* of his time and also one of the most distinguished philosophers of the *da'wah*. His knowledge was very wide and he was highly praised by later *du'ah* and Fāṭimī writers. Dā'ī Idris for example speaks of him as the foundation of the *da'wah* and one "who solved many problems". Noorudīn Aḥmad says: "Had the *da'wah* produced no philosopher except for al-Kirmanī that would have been honor enough for us."



I apologise to the general reader of this bayān who is simply looking to know more about Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﴿﴾, for going into such detail, but I have (and this said without any sense of pride) provided in these pages both for that general reader and also for that reader more interested in the background of the system which ‘taught’ or ‘formed’ Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﴿﴾ and the figures within the *da‘wah*, their relation to one another hierarchically and how they worked and shared responsibility, from the *mukasir*, mainly responsible for attracting prospective initiates, all the way up to the *dā‘i al-mutlaq* who worked directly under the ʾImām ﴿﴾ of his time supervising the *da‘wah* throughout the many islands (*al-jazāʾir*).

This information is not generally available, especially in one place at one time. Indeed I had to rewrite much of this after having the paper upon which I wrote about this, many years ago, disappeared as a result of an enthusiastic helper cleaning my desk and tossing out what seemed to be an irrelevant list of names and functions.

In any case this was the world in which Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﴿﴾ rose to the peaks, becoming the *hujjah* (الحجة) for Khurāsān under the auspices of the ʾImām ﴿﴾ and reporting directly back to his teacher, Muʾayyad fī-d-Dīn al-Shīrāzī ﴿﴾, who was the *Da‘i al-Mutlaq* (the unrestricted caller/الداعي المطلق) of his time and responsible before the ʾImām ﴿﴾ for the various islands scattered throughout the world.

In al-Qahirah under Muʾayyad fī-d-Dīn ﴿﴾ he became thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of the Fāṭimids, and the introduction of these teachings into his native country became in time the sole object of his life. He was appointed as the *Hujjat-i Khurāsān* by the ʾImām ﴿﴾, though the hostility he encountered in the propagation of the *da‘wah* after his return to Greater Khurāsān in 1052 A.D. and Sunnī fanaticism compelled him at last to flee Khurāsān. After wandering from place to place, he finally found refuge in Yamgan (about 1060 A.D.) in the mountains of Badakhshān (بدخشان/Бадахшон), where he spent the last decades of his life as a hermit, while time gathering an elite number of devoted students, who have handed down his doctrines to succeeding generations up to now.

There are still three more areas that need to be covered.

The first concerns the teachings of the Fāṭimids in context of pre-Alamut ʿIsmaʿilī writings within the larger context of ʾIslām, and, beyond that, what his own teachings were within the *da‘wah*.

At a general level, as Wikipedia puts it, “The Fāṭimid Caliphate (al-Fāṭimiyyūn/ الفاطميون) was a Shi‘ah caliphate, which spanned North Africa from the Red Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The dynasty ruled across the Mediterranean coast of Africa and ultimately made Egypt the centre of the caliphate. At its height, the caliphate included, in addition to Egypt, varying areas of the Maghreb, Sudan, Sicily, the Levant, and Hijaz.”



[and yes I am aware I have said this before and even provided a similar map but just recently a highly intelligent student working on an advanced degree in Islamic Studies here at the University of Virginia came to me, knowing some of my interests, asking about who the Fāṭimids were. I admit to being slightly incredulous that someone who was working on an advanced degree knew next to nothing about a Kḫalifate that had been in power for almost three hundred years and who had ruled the ʾIslāmīc domains from the Atlantic to Damascus, that controlled the two holy cities of Makkah and Madinah, that founded the Cairo we know, including al-Azhar arguably the oldest university in the world, and knew next to nothing about them (the Fāṭimids) and, actually confessed to having a rather negative picture of them based upon her ‘proper’ Sunnī upbringing and what she had heard or gathered from here and there.]

The Fāṭimids were descended from Fāṭimah ﷺ, the daughter of Prophet ﷺ from the line of Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq (جعفر بن محمد الصادق), a descendant of ‘Alī ﷺ on his father’s side and a descendant of Abu Bakr ﷺ on his mother’s side and was himself a prominent Muslim jurist and the teacher of two founders of Sunni madḥāhib, Abū Ḥanīfa – founder of the Ḥanafi school, and Mālīk ibn ‘Anas – founder of the Mālīki school as well as Mūsā al-Kaḍḥīm ﷺ, his son, the seventh ʾImām according to the Twelvers and Ismā‘īl ibn Ja‘far, his first born, the sixth ʾImām ﷺ according to the ʾIsmā‘īlīs.

He was also a teacher of Jābir ibn Hayyān, known in Europe as Geber, a mathematician and founder of the aponymous mathematical system of al-Gebra, (algebra) and other great scholars .

The Fāṭimid dawlah first took shape among the Berber tribe of Kutama from Algeria. In 909 the Fāṭimid established the Tunisian city of Mahdia as their capital. In 948 they shifted their capital to al-Mansuriya and in 969 they conquered Miṣr (Ægypt) and built the city of al-Qāhirah (Cairo/القاهرة), which became the capital and Miṣr became the political, cultural, and religious centre of the state.

The ruling elite and aristocracy belonged to the ʾIsmāʿīlī branch of the Shīʿah, as did the leaders of the dynasty. They are also part of the chain of holders of the office of the Kḫalīfah, as recognized by orthodox Muslims. Therefore, this constitutes a rare period in history in which the descendants of ʿAlī ﷺ via the daughter of the Prophet ﷺ, Fāṭimah ﷺ and the Kḫilāfah were united to any degree, except for the final period of the Raṣhīdūn under ʿAlī ﷺ himself.

The Kḫilāfah, for the most part, exercised a high degree of religious tolerance towards non-ʾIsmāʿīlī schools of ʾIslām as well as Jews, Maltese Christians, and Coptic Christians. The Fāṭimids were also distinguished by the non-racist acceptance of Berbers in its establishment and development particularly on military/political levels.

It is this last paragraph that deserves some additional commentary.

Allāh ﷻ says,

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ • ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

laqaḍā kḫalaqnā-l-iṅsāna fī aḥsani taqāwīm
thumma radadnāhū ʾasfala sāfilīn

surely We created the human in the best of forms
and then reduced him to the lowest of the low.

(Sūrah aṭ-Ṭin 95:4-5)

Note that Allāh ﷻ say that He created the *human being* in the best of forms — not that he created the Muslim or the Arab or the Christian or the Jew or the Hindu or the Buddhist or the Black man or the Red man or the Brown man or the White man in the best of forms — but the *human being* in the best of forms.

or consider the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ.

“I created My servants in the true form (*fiṭrah*/فطرة), but the *shayātīn* (devils) made them go astray.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.)

Abu-Huraira narrated that the Prophet said, “No child is born except on the *fiṭrah* and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian or Magian (Zoroastrian), as an animal produces a perfect young animal: do you see any part of its body missing?”- Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Volume 2, Book 23, Number 44

Understanding this ³āyāt and these ḥadīth is of the greatest importance, for what it means is that everybody is created perfectly and in the best of forms and then they descend to the lowest of forms.

EVERYBODY

this, I dare to say, is the central principle of Fāṭimid thought.

EVERYBODY

After you are born things happen. But in the beginning everybody is perfect and, if in the beginning everybody is perfect, then surely there must be a way to return people to perfection, And this is exactly the true and deep reason behind all of the teaching of the Fāṭimids under their ³Imāms, who through *naṣṣ* (explicit designation which is a prerogative bestowed by Allāh upon a chosen person who, before his death with the guidance of Allāh, transfers the ³Imāmate to another) insured the continuity of *walaya* in an-other body. That happened to ³Alī when the Prophet said.

“Whose *mawla* I am ³Alī is his *mawla*.”

and

أنا مدينة العلم، وعلي بابها، فمن أراد العلم، فليأت الباب

³Anā madīnatu-l-³ilm wa ³Alī bābuhā;
fa-man ³arada-l-³ilm fa-l-yati-l-bāb

I am the city of knowledge and ³Alī is its gate;
so whoever desires knowledge, let him enter the gate.

(*al-Mustadrak* of al-Hakim, *Fadā'il as-Sahāba* of Aḥmad Ibn Hanbal

In other words they knew what they were talking about and they knew what they were doing and how to go about doing it which was nothing less than the attempt by spiritual means to return people to their original perfection (*fī aḥṣani taqwīm*/فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ) 95:4.

The whole elaborate system of *da'wah* we have written about in the preceeding pages was for just that purpose: to return people, all and any people, to their original state (*fiṭra*) of perfection.

This matter of “all and any” is a most important part of the equation. If you look at what is happening in the Muslim world today you will find intolerance, discord, killing, rape, hostage etc.

What are the “reason(s)” for this behavior, which is so obviously not Muslim and contrary to everything that Allāh ﴿﴾ and the Prophet ﴿﴾ have made known to us concerning behavior in relationships between Muslims (and, indeed, all human beings)?

“Hold fast to the rope of Allāh all together and be not disunited. Remember the favor of Allāh to you when you were enemies He united your hearts so by His favour you became brothers.” (3:103)

“The believers are brethren, so make peace between your brethren . Do not find fault with your own people, nor call one another by [bad] nicknames.” (49:10-12)

“Help one another in good and righteous works, and do not help one another in sin and aggression.” (5:2)

“Do not hate one another and do not be jealous of one another and do not boycott one another, and be servants of Allāh, as brothers; and it is not lawful for a Muslim to sever his relations with his brother for more than three days.” (al-Bukhārī)

“You will see the believers in their having mercy for one another, and in their love for one another, and in their kindness towards one another, like the human body: when one limb is ailing, the whole body feels it, one part calling out to the other with sleeplessness and fever.” (al-Bukhārī)

“None of you will be a believer (*mu'min*) until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” (al-Bukhārī)

However these suggested models of relations are not being followed by Muslims and instead what we find is that a good deal of our behavior as Muslims toward other Muslims (not to mention toward Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists etc) derives from the prime sin of Shayṭān, which is his belief he was better than °Ādam ﴿﴾.

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ

qala mā mana° aka allā tasjuda idh amartuka

qala anā khayrun minhu khalaqtanī min nārin wa khalaqtahu miñ ṭīn

He said,

”What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you to?”

He replied,

‘I am better than him.

You created me from fire and You created him from clay.’

(Sūrātu-l-Ā°raf 7:12)

All these “wars” whether they be in Syria or in Ægypt, or in Libya, or in Malī, or in Yemen, or in Somali, or in Bahrein or...or...or...or in one’s local masjid, and even in the zawāyia, are based on the shayṭānic belief that “I am better than you” or “We are better than you.” We are Sunnis and you are Shi‘ah, we are Hanafī and you are Maliki, we are Deobandi you are Berelwi, we are Naqshabandi you are Qadri, we are Chishti you are Shadhḍulī, We are Salafī and you are Šūfī, we fix the beginning of Ramadan by calculation you insist on visually sighting the moon and so on and on and on.

And everywhere is war,

All because one person or one group think they are better than the other and they “know” and others don’t – our way or the highway..

During the Fāṭimī rule it didn’t matter exactly “what” you were, or “what” you thought but what mattered (then *and* now) was how close your belief (‘*imān*) and your behavior (‘*amal*) matched up with your original nature (*fiṭrah*) at the time of your birth.

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ

wa ‘ada-llāhul-ladḥīna ‘āmanū miṅkum wa‘amilū-ṣ-ṣaliḥāti
la yastahḥlifannahum fi-l-arḍ

Allāh has promised to appoint those of you who believe and perform good deeds as [His] representatives on earth...

(Sūratu-n-Nūr 24:44)



If you look up “Fatimid Dynasty” or Fatimid Emptre or “Fatimid Caliphate” or “Fatimid Beliefs” you will find literally hundreds of different, often opposing and, many times, intensely negative views. They are called Ghulāt (غلاة), Kaffirs, Extremists, Exaggerators, Dogs, and so forth. Accordingly, many early scholarly overviews have been made either taking into account biased sectarian perspectives or considering Shi‘ism as a minor chapter in the history of ‘Is-lām, also given the difficulties faced by scholars wishing to obtain Shi‘a manuscripts in Sunni countries. Thus the picture of Shi‘ism that has emerged is one of a political and economic-based movement which has degenerated into a religious millenarian heresy.

In the Middle Ages, scanty information on Shi‘ism, particularly gathered in encounters with the Fāṭimiyyūn, was provided by Crusader writers and historians such as William of Tyre and Jaques de Vitry and most often were marred by prejudice and distortion.

More even-handed and deeper studies began to emerge in the early 20th Century from the Russian scholar W. Ivanow who, beginning from the third decade of the 20th century, devoted his scientific endeavors to the study of the °Ismā'īlī religious phenomena, editing and studying an impressive amount of first-hand works (vide *Studies in Early Persian Ismailism*, 1948).

A pupil of Etienne Gilson, Henri Corbin, was put in touch with Iranian Shi'ism by Massignon, who had contributed to the development of the study of Shi'ism by first outlining important aspects of the mystical-oriented ethos of Shi'ism at the Sorbonne. Corbin eventually wound up after WWII in Tehran as the director of the French Institute of Iranian Studies and founder of the series Bibliothèque Iranienne, never abandoned his spiritual and scholarly attachment to Iran and Shi'ism, devotedly collecting, editing, and translating some of the most important works of Shi'ah theology, philosophy, and gnosis (عرفان/°irfān). At roughly around the same time he was also training a generation of scholars that would eventually vivify international debate on Shi'ism both in Iran and in Western academia through his many contributions.

His intellectual circle was in turn linked to the broader and prestigious milieu of European scholars meeting on a regular basis at the *Eranos* sessions in Ascona; among others in that circle were Mircea Eliade, Carl Gustav Jung, and Gershom Scholem.

Famed Iranian intellectual Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a prolific traditionalist scholar still active and presently based in North America, besides writing a number of popular and best-selling general surveys on Shi'ism and Şufism, founded the Imperial Academy of Philosophy in Tehran (which after the Revolution was renamed *Anjuman-i hikmat wa falsafa*, or the Institute for [the study] of Hikmah and Philosophy), that eventually became, besides the French Institute of Iranian Studies, directed by Henri Corbin, the second research center of attraction for those academics, Iranian and foreigners alike, interested in the study of °Imāmī Shi'ism. Outside of Iran, two major centers were involved in Corbin's effort to revivify traditional Iranian philosophy. The first was the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* at the Sorbonne, where Corbin used to teach dense courses related to his pioneering research in Iran, and the second was McGill's University Institute of Islamic Shi'ism Studies, founded in 1954 by Dr. Wilfred Cantwell Smith.

From 1964, Corbin's close associate Hermann Landolt was Professor of Islamic Thought at the Institute. Other important public intellectuals and researchers that shared a common path with Corbin's pupils play a pivotal role in Iranian internal debate today. Their names are well-known and include Dariush Shayegan, based in Paris and Tehran, where he teaches courses on comparative religions, author of acclaimed and best-selling essays on Iranian religious culture; Reza Davari Ardakani, a conservative philosopher, famous for his controversy with the leading progressive intellectual 'Abdolkarim Soroush; Nasrollah Pourjavady (*Kings of Love*, 1978, with Peter Lamborn Wilson), whose books and articles on Imami Sufism are widely read both in Iran and abroad.

More than tangential to the main characters of this environment were the contributions of revered 'Imāmī 'ulemā, most notably the late 'Allama Tabataba'ī (علامه طباطبائی), most well known for his *Tafsīr al-Mizān* (تفسير الميزان), a monumental Qur'ānic exegesis, and his major philosophical work which is a voluminous commentary on the *Asfār al-'arba'ah*, the magnum opus of Mullā Ṣadrā (ملا صدرا) who was the last of the great Persian (Iranian) Muslim thinkers of the medieval age.

In his later years he would often hold study sessions with Henri Corbin and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in which not only the classical texts of divine wisdom and gnosis were discussed, but also a whole cycle of what Nasr calls comparative gnosis, in which in each session the sacred texts of one of the major religions, containing mystical and gnostic teachings, such as the Tao Te Ching, the Upanishads and the Gospel of John, were discussed and compared with Sufism and Islamic gnostic doctrines in general.

The situation changed for the better at the end of the 1960s, when a major event occurred in marking the passage of the study of Shī'ism from a small circle of practitioners to a broader audience of specialists and readers, that is the 1968 *Colloque de Strasbourg*, a round table about Shī'ism attended by the then leading specialists of 'Imāmism plus a representation of the old generation of 'Islāmicists who had done research on this topic. Worth noting is the participation of Henri Corbin, G. Vajda, Seyyed Hosseyn Nasr, Francesco Gabrieli, Wilfred Madelung, and the leading Lebanese 'alim Mūsā Ṣadr, whose paper, unfortunately, never reached the editors and is thus missing from the proceedings.

I trust, as I said earlier, the listener/reader will not find this a digression, but rather will understand that finding out anything *real* about ʿIsmāʿilism and Fāṭimid thought is very difficult and the above is meant to point in general to thinkers, authors and texts that may provide a dedicated and intrepid searcher with some, perhaps, useful details both in general and specific. Also the publications and the library of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (www.iis.ac.uk/) is a very useful source for manuscript collections of ʿIsmāʿīlī literature, in languages such as Arabic, Persian and Gujarati.

The reason for all of this of course is that it is not really possible to understand Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﷺ without some rather deep grounding in ʿIsmāʿilism in general and Fāṭimid thought specifically.

There is a well known cliché attributed to Winston Churchill that says: “history is written by the victors”. This being the case since the time of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn ʿAyyūbī (صلاح الدين أيوب) (better known in the Western world as Saladin), the first Sultan of Egypt and Syria and founder of the ʿAyyūbid dynasty who put an end to the Fāṭimid rule in 567/1171, it has been very difficult to know the reality of the Fāṭimī Khilāfah and the true ‘mission’ of the *daʿwah* which was to covert total darkness at every level into light. In every cycle of history a portion of darkness is reconverted into light and these cycles will continue until all matter is reconverted into *nūr* (light) and all matter that exists will be transformed back into the best of forms and it is light which will ultimately prevail.

And this is a major reason why the custodians of the literal legal ex-post facto prophecy, the legatees of socio-political ʿIslām, have done everything they could to both obscure the name of the Fāṭimids reduce them to utter obscurity, casting doubt upon the sincerity and truth of their ʿIslām, because they knew (and know) it doesn’t matter in the end “who” you are but rather it matters *what* you are.

This, among other related issues, is really why ʿAlī and al-Ḥusayn ﷺ and so many more who took their path were murdered and martyred and this also is why Nāṣir-i Khusrō ﷺ was hectorred and hounded and finally driven into exile on his return from al-Qāhirah.

In al-Qāhirah the Ayyubids had all the treasures of the Fāṭimids including the books, burned, and thrown into the Nile, or onto a great heap and then covered with sand, so that a regular “hill of books” was formed. It is said that the Mamluk soldiers used to sole their shoes with the fine bindings. The number of books alone said to have been disposed of varied from between 120,000 to 2,000,000.

Thus the Fāṭimid Khilāfah, founded in the Maghrib in 297/909, and which over its lifetime embodied one of the greatest successes of °Islām in terms of its actual and real adherence to the teachings of the Prophet ❶ as the Mercy to all of the creation and its dedication to the restoration of humanity to the best of forms (*fiṭra*). It came to an end (functionally) after 262 years and the teachings, for all intents and purposes, have been lost to time except as distortions, half truths and lies, to the point where a bright young lady studying Islamic history at a major US university had little or no idea of who or what the Fāṭimids were in actuality or of what their teachings consisted.

The United States was founded in 1786 and it is now 2014, which is 228 years of existence. Is it really conceivable that little or nothing would be known of the United States in 1,000 years? Maybe or maybe not, but most likely not. Yet that is just what has happened to the memories of the Fāṭimid Khilāfah in the eyes and minds, not to mention hearts, of most Muslim peoples. The Fāṭimids are not really there except for the most part as distortions and half truths and lies which make it very difficult to discover the truth.

And...oh yes...say some there are a lot of ruins in al-Qāhirah and there is al-Azhar University and Masjid al-Husayn ❷ but that's just old buildings and "assorted historical rubbish" from the past.

All of the above is held to be without any relevance when in truth the teachings of the Fāṭimids are actually of the highest relevance but just not in the political legal realm of modern °Islām.

Too *spiritual* by far.

And this is not only in the Sunnī world but also in the world of the modern day Iranian Shi'ah. Devoid of the figure of a legitimate °Imam ❸, what you have is the same political-legal setup which becomes the justification for the institution of the rationalist imitation (*taqqlīd*/تَقْلِيد) of the "most learned" and the management of political power by its ultimate theorization, the *Marja-i Taqqlīd* (lit. "source of the imitation") who function under the "Supreme Leader" (*vali-e faghih*/ولی فقیه) in the absence, again, of a legitimate °Imām (محمد ابن حسن المهدي) ❹, who of course has been in occlusion for more than a thousand years (at least according to some) and, if the truth be told, that is where many of the present day fuqahā° and 'leaders' would like to keep him lest their own 'powers' disappear.

Another view is that the Hidden Imam is on earth "among the body of the Shi'ah" but "incognito" so still functionally unavailable.

When I say, "All of the above is held to be without any relevance when in truth the teachings of the Fātimids are actually of the highest relevance but just not in the political legal realm of modern 'Islām," I must explicate this for the listener/reader and also I must tie in why we are bothering to write this bayān about Nāṣir-i Khusrō ❁ and what exactly does he have to do with all of this.

When you look up Nāṣir-i Khusrō ❁ you find such things as:

"He was well versed in the branches of the natural sciences, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and astrology, Greek philosophy, and the writings of al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina; and in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. He also studied Arabic, Turkish, Greek, the vernacular languages of India and Sindh, and even Hebrew; and had visited Multan and Lahore and a score of cities in Asia and Africa including Makkah, Madīnah and al-Quds as-Sharīf (Jerusalem) and al-Khalīl (Hebron) and (Bayt Laham) Behtlehem."

Or: "The great and-well-known Ismaili Missionary Hakim Nasir Khusraw, who is considered as the Real Wisdom of the East, was a celebrated medieval erudite poet, philosopher, traveller and Hujjat of Khurasan. Nasir Khusraw was one of the most important figures of 11th century Iran – an era which has produced such men of prominence as Omar Khayyam, Hasan bin Sabbah. and al-Mua'yyid ash-Shirazi. He sought education from his early childhood and devoted about thirty years to achieving it. He became all in all in every field of knowledge, in intellectual, as well as traditional. He memorised the Qur'ān and became an expert in tradition and in interpretation of Qur'ān. Besides Islamic literature. he also studied the New (ʿinjīll /إنجيل) and Old (tānkh/תנ"ך) Testaments and books of other religions thoroughly. He studied the ai-Magisty of Ptolemy, geometry of Euclid, al-chemy (chemistry), physics, logic, music, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, astrology etc. He had a profound knowledge of literature and knew Hebrew, Sanskrit besides Arabic, Persian, Turkey and Greek languages. He studied the philosophy of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the epistles of Kindi, Farabi and Avicenna (Abu 'Alī Sina). He refers to this high status of his knowledge in the *Diwān*".

And he accomplished the above before he went on Hajj and continued on to Egypt to study under al-Mu'ayyid ❁ and the 'Imām ❁.

It is generally accepted that Nāṣir-i Khusrō ❁ made hajj (pilgrimage) as an orthodox Muslim and embraced the Fātimid *da'wah* in Egypt when he studied at al-Azhar on his return from Makkah.

According to Dr. Ivanow “for him (Nāṣir-i Khusrō) obviously the truth was only ʾIslām and it may be easily realized that the truth was the authentic interpretation of religion which can be received only from the ʾImām. It is quite possible, that he might have been Shiʿah, perhaps a change of dynasty, if it upset his career, the frustration of his youthful ambitions, even his probable contacts with ʾIsmāʿīlīs – all these together possibly inspired him to espouse the cause of the Fātimids whose star had never risen so high as at that particular time, After completing his higher studies under the *dāʿi al-mutlaq*, al-Muʾayyid fī-dīn ash-Shirazī and the ʾImām himself, he returned to his native land after some time and served as an ʾIsmāʿīli missionary of the high rank of a *Hujjah* or Proof of ʾIslām.”

Proof by *nature* of his being – *not* by books or theoretical knowledge.

How, one might well ask, can one in our time hope to realise his degree of knowledge and understanding?

On a general level one can, of course, thoroughly immerse oneself in what he has left behind by way of books and poetry. We have discussed several of them in different places in this *bayān* or essay. A student at the Prince Aly Khan Religious Night School in Karachi has summed these up as follows,

“His great works include the most important great Philosophical ‘*Diwān*’ which was composed in the miserable years of his exile. The artistic value of his poems is not especially high, but the philosophical matter which still awaits its investigator is of very great importance for the history of Persian Literature. It is a complete encyclopaedia of Ismaili teaching but of-course unsystematic one. From a linguistic standpoint also the work is of extraordinary interest. A good edition of the Persian text appeared in Teheran in 1928 C.E. to which two not very long didactic poems were appended.

Rushanai-nama or The Book of Felicity sharply criticises the aristocracy of the Persian Empire and praises the peasant as “The true nourisher of every living creature”.

The best known of Nāṣir’s Prose works is, as we said, is the *Safarnāma*, a description of his pilgrimage to Makkah and importantly an exceedingly valuable source of the most varied information. As he appears in this best of his works he was by outlook a country squire, always with a keen eye on matters which belonged to the usual circle of interest of such people in his native land.

He pays special attention to land, irrigation facilities, bazaars (markets), trade and industry. But unfortunately this work has come down to us only in a very mutilated form and has probably been edited perhaps by a Sunni hand. The other works of Nāṣir are mainly ʾIsmāʿīlī (الإسماعيلية) text books.

Among them first place should be given to *Zad-al Musāfirin*, which is an encyclopaedia of a special character dealing with the most varied questions of a metaphysical and cosmographical nature. The doctrine of Tawīl (طویل) or allegorical interpretation is clearly explained by him through such subjects as the Garden, the Fire, the Resurrection, the torment of tombs, the rising of the sun from the West etc. which are all allegorically explained in his work.

No less important is the *Wadḥ-i-Din*, a general introduction to ʾIsmāʿīlism, which gradually initiates the reader in ʾIsmāʿīlī belief by means of quotations from the Qurʾān, clearly put together. It and ʾUmmu-l-Kitāb, were until quite recently widely disseminated among the ʾIsmāʿīlis of the Pamirs are sometimes credited to our author Sayyidnā Nāṣir-i Khusrō ۞. He also wrote more than a dozen treatises expounding the doctrines of the Ismailis, among them the *Jamīʿa-l-Hikmatayn* in which he attempted a harmony between theology and philosophy. His other works are: *Khwana-l-lkhwān*, *Shish-Fasi*, *Gushaish wa-Rihaish*, *Bustānu-l-ʿuqūl*, as well as *Dalīlu-l-Mutahharin* etc.

Nāṣir's works were numerous but truly not many have survived in perfect form. Modern ʾIsmāʿīlī researcher Nāṣir Hunzai, who has made vast studies of his works and has also translated most of them into Urdu, says that although a considerable portion of Nāṣir's work is now available in good editions, one cannot yet assert that sufficient light has been thrown upon his striking being. It would be particularly valuable if his philosophical system could be studied, as it is of far-reaching importance for the history of thought in Persia and the history of the Fāṭimīyyūn. Although Nāṣir-i Khusrō ۞ was a great philosopher and poet, his main subject *remained* religion. He used his poetry and philosophy for the propagation of the Fāṭimid *daʿwah* and always took his solace in spiritual elevation through *Taid-i-ʾImām* (the spiritual help of the ʾImām ۞). To him philosophy was nothing in comparison to the spiritual elevation. He says: *Karkunan-j-khudai ra chubibini, Dil nadihi bazbah flasafah marhūh*, "When you once behold the realities of Allāh ۞ then you will never be pawned off by philosophy."

The ʾIsmāʾīlīs, like all other Shīʿah believe in the hidden meaning of the Qurʾān which they refer to as *taʾwīl* (تأويل). In the *tafsīr* (تفسير) literature of Sunni ʾIslām the words *tafsīr* and *taʾwīl* are used almost synonymously. But in the Shīʿah Islām both have distinct meaning. *Tafsīr* in Shiʿa Islam refers to the manifest meaning of the Qurʾān and *taʾwīl* refers to its hidden meaning. The Sunnis and Shīʿah differ on the meaning of the sixth verse of the chapter three i.e. the chapter of ʾĀl ʾImrān. According to Sunni commentators this verse means that “No one knows its interpretation (*taʾwīl*/the hidden meaning) save Allāh ﷻ and the *rasikhūna fi-ʿilm* (those firmly rooted in knowledge) say: “We believe in it, it is all from our Lord.” Thus according to the Sunni commentators on the Qurʾān Allāh ﷻ alone has the knowledge of *taʾwīl* and the *rasi-khūna fi-ʿilm* (or the great ʿulamā and ʿarīfīn) do not possess that knowledge and believe that it is known only to Allāh ﷻ.

The Shīʿah on the other hand, believe that the knowledge of *taʾwīl* is possessed by the *rasikhūna fi-ʿilm* also and these *rasikhūna fi-ʿilm* are the ʾImāms from the progeny of Fāṭmah and ʿAlī ﷺ. Not only Allāh ﷻ but the Prophet ﷺ, his Inheritor (*waṣī*/وصي) ﷺ, and the ʾImāms ﷺ from his progeny also possess the knowledge of *taʾwīl*. Now the important question is what is this *taʾwīl*?. In the ʾIsmāʾīlī literature it is also called *ʿilm min-ladunni* or knowledge which passes orally from the Prophet ﷺ to his Waṣī ﷺ and from the Waṣī ﷺ to the ʾImām ﷺ and from one ʾImām ﷺ to the next.

But if we go historically then one finds the exposition of *taʾwīl* literature much later during the ʾAbbāsīd period, in fact, after the controversy about the appointment of Ismaʿīl and the subsequent split in the Shiʿa community.

The hidden meaning of the Qurʾānic verses is attempted by the ʾIsmāʾīlī ʾimāms and *duʿah* after the spread of Greek knowledge in the Islamic world. We have already written about The epistles of the *Rasāʾil Ikhwānu-s-Safa* (the Brethren of Purity) are of great importance in ʾIsmāʾīlī literature. These epistles though do not attempt exposition of *taʾwīl* systematically but do contain elements of it and could be taken as the beginning of the exposition of the discipline of *taʾwīl*.

The ʾIsmāʾīlī *duʿah* particularly Yaḳūbb al-Sijistānī, Jaʿfar Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, Qadī al-Nuʿman, Hamiduddīn Kirmanī, Muaʿyyad ash-Shirāzī, and several others have played great role in developing this unique discipline.

It will be no exaggeration to say that ‘*ilm at-ta’wīl* is really unique to the ‘Ismā‘īlīs and it was a major attempt to synthesise all the available knowledge of the time – particularly the Greek knowledge popularised by the ‘Abbāsids through translations of the Greek classics into Arabic – with the Islamic teachings.

The ‘Ismā‘īlīs on the other hand do not believe that the ‘*ilm at-ta’wīl* developed with the popularisation of the Greek knowledge but is part of the ‘*ilm al-nubuwwat* (i.e. the Prophetic knowledge) passed on from ‘Imām ❁ to ‘Imām ❁ as we mentioned earlier. But historically speaking we do not find its record before the Epistles of *Ikhwanu-s-Safa* were compiled. One can say that this knowledge of *ta’wīl* among the ‘Ismā‘īlīs was reduced to writing only when faced with the challenge of Greek knowledge. Ash‘arīs among the Sunnis met this challenge by totally opposing the Greek philosophy (though using its tools to refute it) while the ‘Ismā‘īlīs among the Shī‘ah met this challenge by attempting a creative synthesis of the Greek knowledge including its cosmogony with the basic teachings of ‘Islām. Thus the ‘Ash‘arīs and the ‘Ismā‘īlīs carved out different ways of meeting the challenge of Greek philosophy and its great impact on the ‘Islāmic world. This impact should not be underrated.

The ‘Ismā‘īlī *ta’wīl* is based on reason. The word *ta’wīl* in Arabic means to go to the first, primary or basic meaning of the word. According to the ‘Ismā‘īlīs each and every verse of the Qur‘ān has basic meaning or hidden meaning apart from the manifest or secondary meaning. According to them a *mu‘min* is one who knows and believes in the hidden or original meaning (*bāṭin*) of the Qur‘ānic verses. The ‘Ismā‘īlīs maintain that there is difference between a Muslim and a Mu‘min. One who recites the *kalimā* and performs all the outer rituals (*ḍahiri*) like offering prayers, fasting, paying *zakāt*, making *hajj* etc. is a Muslim. But being a *Mu‘min* is more than being a Muslim. A *Mu‘min* is thus one who not only performs the *ḍahiri* prescriptions but also believes in the *bāṭini*, real, original, and intended meaning of, and reason for, these actions.

The ‘Ismā‘īlīs quote 49:14 which reads as follows: “The dwellers of the desert say: We believe (‘*āmanna*). Say: You believe not, but say, We submit (‘*aslamna*); for ‘*imān* has not yet entered your hearts.”

This verse makes distinction between ‘Islām and ‘Imān, between those who submit (*Muslims*) and those who believe (*Mu‘min*). ‘Imān, according to them is not mere acceptance of what is manifest *ḍahir* but also sincere belief in the *bāṭin* (the hidden, the original).

Before we proceed further it is necessary to shed light on what is *bāṭin* or what is the way *ta'wīl* (تأويل) is done? It is also important to note that ordinary people are not supposed to know the original meaning or the *ta'wīl*. It is only the chosen few or the initiated who are entitled to know. The contents of *ta'wīl* was kept a strictly guided secret even from ordinary believers. The reason was obvious. The ʾIsmāʾīlīs were looked upon as heretics by the orthodox Muslims. ʾImām al-Ghazali also wrote a book on Bāṭinis and condemned them. They were accused of believing in *ḥulūl* (حلول), and *tanasukh* (التناسخ) – incarnationism or the transmigration of souls though this is not true. Even Dr. Kamil Husain, who was chairman of the department of Ismāʾīlī Studies, al-Azhar, Cairo, strongly refuted such allegations. But the ʾIsmāʾīlīs, as we have sought to make clear, were misunderstood about their real beliefs.

The ʾIsmāʾīlīs, for fear of such condemnations had to hide from the generality of Muslims their beliefs in *bāṭini* theology and reveal it only to the chosen or initiated few through the process we have described. The knowledge of the *bāṭin* was revealed to a person only after ensuring his/her sincerity and faithfulness.

According to the ʾIsmāʾīlīs there is a whole ideal system called *mathāl* (which has resemblance and similarity with something else, but its being exactly like that is not necessary) and here on earth there is a corresponding system called *mamthūl* (representative of the ideal or what is symbolised). To understand this it is necessary to know that Allāh ﷻ is a totally transcendent Being who cannot be comprehended by any human mind at all. Allāh ﷻ transcends everything conceivable and is just incomprehensible. Allāh ﷻ has no attributes whatsoever. Allāh ﷻ is also not actively involved in creation of the universe. Allāh ﷻ only created the *ʿuqūl* (intellects made of pure light). The intellects are fine beings made of light. The matter, as opposed to light, is *kathīf* (heavy and dark) Allāh ﷻ or the Ultimate Being has no role in creation of matter. He is referred to by al-Sijistani as *Mubdʿi al-Mubdīʿat* (i.e. the Creator of the creators. His role ceased with creation of the *ʿUqūl* (the Intellects). Allāh ﷻ creates only light and another dimension of darkness which moves faster than light called the Black Light.

Matter was created by the Intellect also called *ʿashir-i-mudabbir* (the Tenth Intellect in charge of managing the universe). Since the ʿAshir-e-Mudabbir is responsible for the creation of matter and this universe it is responsible to reconvert darkness into light (*nūr*).

The corresponding being on earth to the Tenth Intellect is the Prophet ﷺ. Thus the Prophet is the *mamthūl* of *ʿAshir-e-Mudabbir* on earth and assists the Tenth Intellect in transforming the *kathāfat* (darkness and heaviness) into *laṭāfat* (*nūr*).

The Prophet ﷺ shows the right path to the people and has been described by the Allāh ﷻ as *sirajan munirah* (i.e. the lighted lamp) for this reason. He transforms the human beings into light (*nūr*). After the Prophet ﷺ it is the ʾImām ؑ who performs this function. And as there cannot be, and is not, any Prophet after Muḥammad ﷺ, he is succeeded by the ʾImāms ؑ from the progeny of Fāṭimah ؑ, his daughter and ʿAlī ؑ, her husband. According to ʾIsmāʾīlī beliefs this earth can *never* remain without an ʾImām, a spiritual guide, an active agent (*mamthūl* of *ʿAshiru-l-Mudabbir*) on earth.

Thus the ʾImām ؑ on earth is the representative of the Tenth Intellect and hence commands highest respect of the believers. He has all the attributes of the Tenth Intellect and since Allāh ﷻ has no attributes (He transcends all attributes and is beyond them), these attributes apply to the Tenth Intellect. Therefore the ʾImām ؑ who is the *mamthūl* of the Tenth Intellect on earth also has these attributes on earth. It is this theory of attributes which was misunderstood by the opponents of the Fatimi Imams as the belief in *hulūl* i.e. descent of Allāh ﷻ into the person of the ʾImām. Dr.Kamil Husain has discussed this in detail in his *Muqaddimah* (introduction) to the *Diwān* of Saiyyidnā al-Muaʾyyid ash-Shirazi ؑ. The person of the ʾImām does not in any way correspond to Allah ﷻ but rather to the Tenth Intellect.

The ʾIsmāʾīlīs also believe in the cyclical theory of history. Since it is the duty of the Tenth Intellect to convert darkness and *kathāfat* in the universe into light in every cycle of history a portion of darkness is reconverted into light and these cycles will continue until entire matter is reconverted into *nūr* (light) and there is no more *kathāfat* in this universe.

In every cycle an Adam ؑ is created and the chain of prophethood ends with the last Prophet who is in turn succeeded by ʾImāms and lastly, in every cycle there appears what is known as *Qāʾim al-Qiyamah* (the one who brings about the Day of Resurrection, the *Qiyamat*). The cycle ends with the *Qāʾim al-Qiyamah* and a another portion of dark matter is converted into light in that cycle. These cycles will continue until there is no more matter in this universe and all matter is transformed into *nūr*.

Nasir al-Khusro ❁

And if all of this is not enough there is yet another major problem in getting to know the real thought of Nāṣir-i Khusrō ❁ and that is the problem of finding a living realised teacher on the order of al-Muaʿyyid ash-Shirazi ❁ not to mention the *very* great difficulty in finding the ʾImām ❁ of this time and the dire consequences in not finding him.

In a sense one is very much in the same position as Nāṣir-i Khusrō ❁ when he wrote:



They are no more
– so I was told –
The Tree, the Hand,
all are gone,
the Assembly dispersed,
the Hand concealed and veiled in secrecy



In fact it was this set of lines that really opened the reality of the teachings of Nāṣir-i Khusrō ❁ combined with a later set:



I stood before you, pale and skeletal
clad in a woolen cloak
and kissed your hand
as if it were the grave of the Prophet
or
Black Stone of the Kaʿaba

and later:

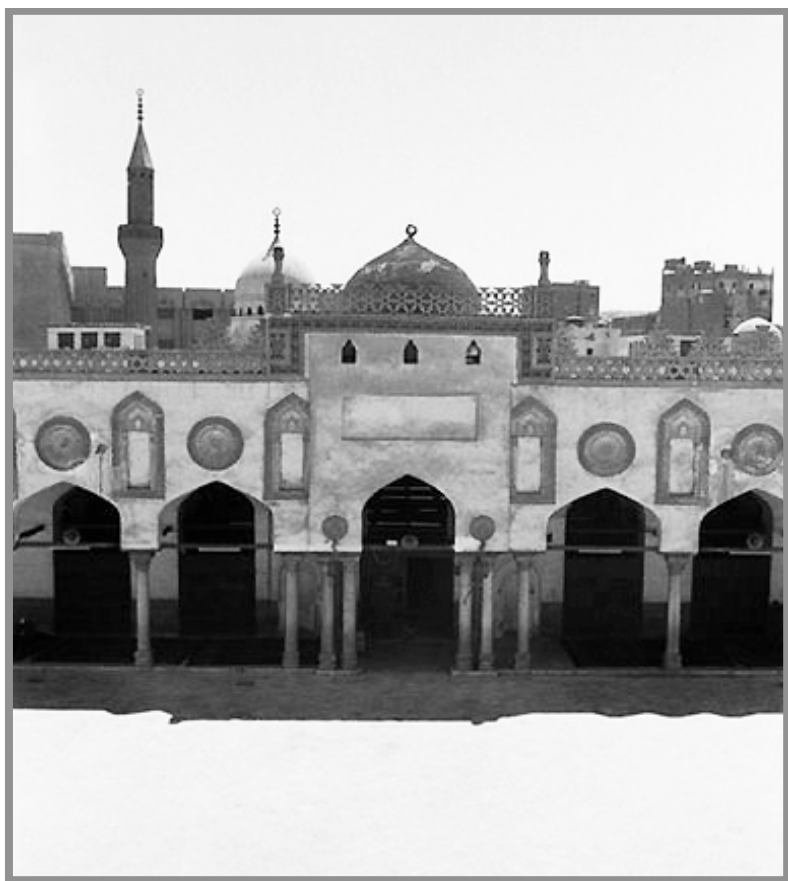


The sage then set his hand upon his heart
(a hundred blessings be on that hand and heart!)
And said, I offer you the remedy of proof and demonstration;
but if you accept,
I shall place a seal upon your lips which must never be broken.
I gave my consent and he affixed the seal.
Drop by drop and day by day he fed me the healing potion,
till my ailment disappeared,.



Again we must always remember that “painted cakes do not satisfy hunger. Forever and ever there is no choice but to pack your bag and take to the road, inwardly or outwardly, if you want the truth.

Qasidah ʿIṭirāfī



The Confessional Ode *of* Naṣir Khusrō



يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

yadu-llāhi fowqa ʿaydīhim

And the Hand of Allāh is above their hands!

(Sūrah al-Faṭḥ 25:7)

“Kih kard az khatir-i-khwaja Muayyid Dar-i-Hikmat kushada bar tu
yazdan shab-i-man rooz-i raushan kard Khwaja za burhanha-i-
choon khurshid-ipakhshan. Mara binamood hazir har do aakm ba
yak ja dar tanam paida pinhan.”

"From the heart of al-Muayyad,
Allāh has opened for me the doors of wisdom.
Khwaja changed my dark night into a bright day
by his arguments right like sun.
He showed me both the worlds in my person,
he made me behold them openly
as well as secretly in one – in my self."

translation in this form

©

2012/1434

Green Mountain School

GreenMountainSchool.Org—e-mail: greenmtn@an-noor.net



Oh widely read, Oh globally travelled one,
(still earth-bound, still caught beneath the sky),
what value would the spheres yet hold for you
were you to catch a glimpse of hidden knowledge?

Will your flesh luxuriate forever
in the boons and blessings of the world?
Why not for a little while enjoy as well
the fruits of knowledge with the tongue of the Spirit?

The dreamer's banquets cannot profit him;
only the waking know the taste of gain and loss.
What does the dreamer know of stars and turquoise dome,
or the things the Almighty brings
to pass upon His dusty sphere?

Wake up from this charming vision,
you who have slept and dreamt for some forty years,
and see that of all the friends of your youth not one remains.
No one is left
to share your drowse and supper but the beasts. . .
and that which donkeys eat is not a blessing
any more than that which Caesar conquers is a kingdom!

Reader.

If you miss the Path I would not be surprised,
for I, like you, languished in perplexity for years.
Three hundred ninety four of them had passed since the Migration,
when my mother dropped me in the dust,
a voiceless creature like a weed which thrives on soil and rain.
From this vegetative state I reached that of the beasts,
and floundered like a bird whose wings are clipped,
till in the Fourth Age I gained the stature of a man

and let a soul of reason worm its way into my gloomy body.
When the clock of years had turned some forty-two rounds,
my conscious self began to seek out wisdom.
From the mouths of sages or the pages of ancient books
I heard of the Cosmos, of the whirl of Time
and the Three Kingdoms;
but I found myself superior to all around me,
and among all creatures so I mused
there must be one superior to others,
like the falcon amongst all birds,
a camel amongst all beasts of burden,
the palm amongst the trees,
the Qurʾān amongst all books,
the Kaʿaba amongst all houses,
heart in the body, sun among stars.

I wondered, and my soul was filled with grief,
my meditations blasted with fear of all the objects of thought.

From every School I searched:
from Shafiite, Malikite, Hanafite and Hanbali
I sought a sign of guidance,
of the Chosen One of Allāh, the Almighty, the Guide;
and each one pointed me a different way,
one to China, one to Africa.

When I asked for a reason, or for corroboration from the Qurʾān,
they recoiled in helplessness, like blind men, like deaf men.

Then one day, I read in the Book the Verse of the Oath,
in which Allāh proclaims His Hand
is above all hands, and pondered on that group
who swore allegiance beneath the Tree
(like Jaʿfar, Miqdad, Salmān, al-Buraa)

I asked myself:
How is it now with that Tree and with that Hand?
Where shall I see that Hand, that group, that Oath?

I asked, but was rebuffed. They are no more
– so I was told –

The Tree, the Hand are gone,
the Assembly dispersed,
the Hand concealed and veiled in secrecy.
Those men were the Companions,
favored by that allegiance
and chosen to be with the Prophet in Paradise.

But I said to myself
In the Book it is clear that Aḥmad ﷺ
is the Messenger of Good News, and the Warner,
luminous as light.

If the unbelievers wished to blow it out
Allāh would light it again in spite of them.
How is it today that no one is left of that Community?
Surely the word of the Universal Judge cannot be false!

Whose hand should we grasp,
where should we take an oath
that even we of latter times might enjoy the justice of heaven?
Why should it be our fault not to be born in that era?
Why should we be deprived of the Prophet,
afflicted and distressed?

My face grew pale as a yellow blossom in the pain of ignorance.
I bowed in the wind of doubt like an aging cypress.
The learned man is like a pomander, his knowledge a halo of musk;
or like a mountain concealing its vein of gold;
but ore without gold, perfume without aroma
are worth no more than dust.

Then I arose and set out on my way,
 remembering neither my home nor past nor garden of roses.
 From Persian, Arab, Hindu, Turk and Jew,
 from the folk of Sind, from the Romans,
 from everyone I met,
 the Philosopher, Manichee, Sabaeen, Atheist,
 I asked, I questioned, I pestered.
 Many a night I made a stone my pillow, the clouds my tent.

I sank as low as a fish,
 I ascended as high as the stars above the hills;
 now in a land where water was frozen as marble,
 now in a land where the very dust was hot as a spark,
 I roamed. now on the sea, now on the high plateau
 or trackless waste, across mountains, sand and streams,
 up and down the precipices,
 coil of rope round my shoulder like a camel driver,
 pack on my back like a mule,
 inquiring I went my way, searching from city to city,
 shore to shore.

Then one day I reached those city gates where angels are servants,
 where planets and stars are slaves,
 a garden of roses and pines girded round with walls
 of emerald and jasper trees,
 set in a desert of gold-embroidered silk,
 its springs sweet as honey, the river of paradise:
 a city which only Virtue can aspire to reach,
 a city whose cypresses are like the blades of Intellect,
 a city whose sages wear brocaded robes woven of silk.
 And here, before these gates, my Reason spoke:
 Here, within these walls,
 find what you seek and do not leave without it.

So I approached the Guardian of the Gate,
and told him of my search.
Rejoice! he answered.
“Your mine has produced a jewel,
for beneath this land of Truth
there flows a crystal ocean of precious pearls and pure clear water.
This is the lofty sphere
of exalted stars;
aye, it is paradise itself, the Abode of Houris.”
I heard these words freighted with meaning,
sweet as honey,
and felt myself on the threshold of heaven.
I told him,
“My soul is weak, though my body may seem strong to you.
I am in pain, but that is nothing.
I refuse a medicine I cannot understand,
I reject all that is beyond the law.”
“I am a doctor.” he answered.
“Speak to me and tell me all that ails you, every detail.”

And I began to ask him
of the things that were first and those that will last,
of the cause of the order of the world
which is the basis of things as they are.
Of what is *genus* and the way in which species are formed.
I asked about the All-powerful, predestination and faith,
Both of which are never inseparable from each other.
But how should one be given precedence over the others?
I asked him of the mechanism of the palpitation of day and night
– how from these –
the beggar becomes rich, and the darkness becomes lit?
I asked about the Prophets and their contradictory messages

Of the reason for the prohibition of drinking blood
or intoxicating wine.

Then I inquired as to the foundation of the *shari'ah*,
And why five prayers have been prescribed.

I asked about the fast that the Prophet ordered to be observed
during the ninth month of the year,

Why should *zakat* be different for silver and gold coins,
Why a fifth on booty and a tithe on irrigated land?

Why should this be one fifth and that one tenth?

Why the brother takes one share while the sister only half?

I also asked about the cause
of the uneven distribution of happiness:

Why does it often happen that a worshipper is aggrieved
while the oppressor is happy?

Or why one pious man is unhappy while another is happy?

Why one unbeliever enjoys his life
while another is dissatisfied?

Why one is born of solid health and good looking
while the other is blind or of weak health from birth?

But yet Allāh always acts in perfect justice
– then –

reason cannot be satisfied by what it, in its imperfection, sees.

I say that it is day but you say it is night.

I asked you to prove that contention
but you in reply draw your dagger.

You say that at a certain place
there is a sacred stone

and all who perform a pilgrimage to it become free from sin.

Azar, the Father of the Prophet ʿIbrāhīm
preached the religion of idolatry

and you preach the worship of a stone.

Truly you are the same to me as Azar.

That sage then set his hand upon his heart
(a hundred blessings be on that hand and heart!)
And said, I offer you the remedy of proof and demonstration;
but if you accept,
I shall place a seal upon your lips which must never be broken.
I gave my consent and he affixed the seal.
Drop by drop and day by day he fed me the healing potion,
till my ailment disappeared,
my tongue became imbued with eloquent speech;
my face, which had been pale as saffron now grew rosy with joy;
I who had been a stone was now a ruby;
I had been dust – now I was ambergris.

He put my hand into the Prophet's hand,
I spoke the Oath beneath that exalted Tree
so heavy with fruit,
so sweet with cooling shade.

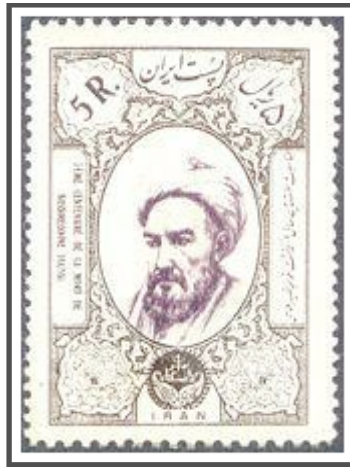
Have you ever heard of a sea which flows from fire?
Have you ever seen a fox become a lion?
The sun can transmute a pebble,
– which even the hand of Nature can never change –
into a gem.

I am that precious stone.

My Sun

is he by whose rays this tenebrous world is filled with light.
In jealousy I cannot speak his name in this poem,
but can only say that for him Plato himself would become a slave.
He is the teacher, hearer of souls, favored by Allāh,
image of wisdom, fountain of knowledge and Truth.
Blessed the ship with him for its anchor,
blessed the city whose sacred gate he ever guards!

Oh Countenance of Knowledge, Virtues Form,
 Heart of Wisdom, Goal of Humankind,
 Oh Pride of Pride;
 I stood before you, pale and skeletal,
 clad in a woolen cloak, and kissed your hand
 as if it were the grave of the Prophet ﷺ or Black Stone of the Ka'aba.
 Six years I served you; and now,
 wherever I am so long as I live
 I'll use my pen and ink, my inkwell and my paper
 in praise of you!



Abū Mu'īn Naṣīr-i Khusrō
 also known as
The Ruby of Badakhshān

Abū Mu'īn Naṣīr-i Khusrō (ناصر خسرو), who ranks among the half dozen greatest poets of Persia, was born in Qubadian, a small town in the region of Marv, in 394 A.H./1004 A.D. Little is known of his childhood and early years except for a few references in his book of poetry, the Dīwān (دیوان), from which this poem is drawn, and his philosophic works. Our information concerning his life is largely derived from his travel book, Safar Nāmah (سفرنامه), which he composed after his seven year journey through the ʿIslāmic world as far as Egypt and back again to his native land of Kḥorāsān (خراسان).

Naṣir Kḥusrō was well versed in all the branches of natural science, in medicine, mathematics, astronomy and astrology, in Greek philosophy and the interpretation of the Qur'ān. He studied Arabic, Turkish, Greek, the vernacular languages of India and Sindh, and perhaps even Hebrew. In about 1046, inspired by a heavenly voice in a dream, he abjured all the luxuries of life, and resolved upon a pilgrimage to the holy shrines of Makkah and Madinah, hoping to find there the solution to his spiritual crisis.



During the 7 years (1046–1052) of his 19,000-kilo journey (2,200 parsangs) he visited Makkah and performed ḥajj four times. In between his four trips to Makkah he studied in Cairo, mainly under the Fātimīd dā'i ('caller') al-Mu'ayyad fi-d-Din Shīrazī, and became thoroughly imbued in the Shī'āh 'Ismā'īlī doctrines of the Fātimīds. After six years of studies he was raised to the position of dā'i himself and appointed as Hujjat-i Kḥorāsān, and thereafter the propagation of 'Ismā'īlī teaching in his native country became the sole object of his life though he was severely persecuted and rejected.

After many years of wanderings he finally found refuge in 1060 in Yamgan in the mountains of Badakhshān (Бадахшон/بدخشان), where he spent the last decades of his life as a hermit, and in the end gathered round him a considerable number of devoted students, who handed down his teachings to succeeding generations.

پر فایده و نعمت چون ابر به نور روز
 وافی و مبارک چو ددم عیسی مریم
 ز می خازن علم و حکم و خانه معمور
 ز می طالع سعد و در اقبال خدائی
 مانند و جگر گوشه جد و پدر خویش
 بر مرکبش از طلعت او دهر مقرر
 بر نام خداوند بر این وصف سلامی
 والله بر آن کس که مرا کرده است آزاد
 ای صورت علم و تن فضل و دل حکمت
 در پیش تو استاده بر این جامه پشیم
 حق که بجز دست تو برب نهدام
 شش سال بودم بر مشول مبارک
 هر جا که بوم تا بریم من که و بیچه
 تا عرعر از باد نوان است همی باد

کز کوه فرو آید چو مشک معطر
 عالی و یاراسته چون گنبد اخضر
 بانام بزرگ آن که بدو دهر معمر
 فخر بشر و بر سر عالم همه افسر
 در صدر چو پیغمبر و در حرب چو حیدر
 وز مرکب او خاک زمین جمله مغبر
 در مجلس بر خواند ابو یعقوب از بر
 استاد و طبیب من و یایه خرد و فر
 ای فایده مردمی و منفر منفر
 این کالبد لاغر با گونه اصف
 چون بر حجر الاسود و بر خاک پیمبر
 شش سال نشستم به در کعبه مجاور
 در شکر تو دارم قلم و دقتر و مجبر
 حضرت به تو آراسته چون باغ به عرعر

Бадахшон



بدخشان ولایت

امروز چه فرق است از این ملک بدان ملک؟
 بگذشته چه اندوه و چه شادی بردانا
 اندیشه کن از حال براهیم و ز قربان
 گر کردی این غرم کسی ز آزر فکرت
 گرمست نه ای دشمن بامستان یکجا
 انجام تو ایند به قران کرد وصیت
 فرزند تو امروز بود جاہل و عاصی
 یا کرت پدر کبر بود ماد ترسخنو
 دانی که خداوند نغمه بود بحر حق
 قفل از دل بردار و قران به سر خود کن
 و راه نیابی نه عجب دارم از یراک
 بگذشته ز بهجت پس سید نود و چار
 بالنده بی دانش مانند نباتی
 از حال نباتی برسیدم به ستوری
 در حال چهارم اثر مردمی آمد
 پیموده شد از کنبه بر من چهل و دو
 رسم فلک و گردش ایام و مواید
 این مرده و آن مرده و املاک بتر
 ناآمده اندوه و گذشته است برابر
 وان غرم براهیم که برد ز پسر سر
 انفرین کنی هر کس بر آزر بنگر
 اندیشه کن از حال خود امروز نکوتر
 بگر که شفیع تو کدام است به محشر
 فردات چه فریاد رسد پیش کر و کر؟
 دی ایشان بجز آتش چه دهد بر؟
 حق کوی و حق اندیش و حق آغاز و حق آور
 تاراه شناسی و گشاده شودت در
 من چون توبسی بودم کمر اه و محیر
 بهناد مرا مادر بر مرکز اغیر
 کز خاک سیه زاید و آب مقطر
 یک چند همی بودم چون مرغک بی پر
 چون ناله ره یافت در این جسم مکر
 جویان خرد گشت مرا نفس سخن و
 از دانا بشنیدم و بر خواند ز دقیر

چون یافتم از هرکس بهتر تن خود را

چون باز مرغان و چو اثر ز بهائم

چون فرقان از کتب و چو کعبه ز بناها

ز اندیشه غمی گشت مرا جان به فکر

از شافعی و مالک و ز قول حنیفی

هر یک به یکی راه دگر کرد اشارت

چون چون و چرا خواستم و آیت محکم

یک روز بنخاندم ز قرآن آیت بیعت

آن قوم که در زیر شجر بیعت کردند

گفتم که کنون آن شجر و دست چگونه است،

گفتند که «آنجا نه شجر ماند و نه آن دست

آنها همه یاران رسولند و بهشتی

گفتم که «به قرآن در پیداست که احمد

و ر خواهد کشتن به دهن کافرا را

چون است که امروز نمانده است از آن قوم؟

ما دست که گیریم و کجا بیعت یزدان

ما جرم چه کردیم نژادیم بدان وقت؟

گفتم «ز همه خلق کسی باید بهتر:

چون نخل ز اشجار و چو یاقوت ز جوهر

چون دل ز تن مردم و خورشید ز اختر»

ترسده شد این نفس مفکر ز مفکر

جستم ره مختار جهان داور رهبر

این سوی ختن خواند مرا آن سوی بربر

در عجز به چمیدند، این کور شد آن کر

«بدست من از بر»

چون بعفر و مقداد و چو سلمان و چو بود

گفتم که کنون آن شجر و دست چگونه است،

کان جمع پرگنده شد آن دست متر

مخصوص بدان بیعت و از خلق مخیر»

بشیر و تیز است و سراج است و منور

روشن کندش ایزد بر کامه کافر

جز حق نبود قول جهان داور اکبر

تا بهجوم مقدم نبود دادمخر؟

محرورم چو رانیم ز پیغمبر و مضطر؟»

رویم چو گل زرد شد از درد بهالت
 ز اندیشه که خاک است و نبات است و ستور است بر مردم در عالم این است محصر
 امروز که مخصوص اند این جان و تن من
 دانا به مثل مشک و زودانش چون بوی
 چون بوی و ز از مشک جدا کرد و ز سنگ
 این ز کجا دشود از مشک از ان پس؟
 برخاستم از جای و سفریش گرفتم
 از پارسی و تازی و ز هندی و ز ترک
 و ز فلسفی و مانوی و صابی و دهری
 از سنگ بسی ساخته ام بستر و بالین
 گاهی به نشیبی شده هم گوشه‌هایی
 گاهی به زینتی که در آب چو مرم
 که دریا که بالا که رفتن بی راه
 که جبل به گردن بر مانند شتر بان
 پرسنده همی رفتم از این شهر بدان شهر
 گفتند که «موضوع شریعت نه به عقل است
 گفتیم که «نماز از چه بر اطفال و مجانین
 وین سر و به ناوقت بنجمد چو خنجر
 هم نسخه دهرم من و هم دهرم کدر
 یا هم به مثل کوه و زودانش چون زر
 بی قدر شود سنگ و شود مشک مزور
 خیزم خبری پرسم از آن دج مخبر
 نر خانم یاد آمد و نر گلشن و منظر
 و ز سندی و رومی و ز عبری همه یکسر
 درخواستم این حاجت و پرسیدم بی مر
 و ز ابر بسی ساخته ام خیمه و چادر
 گاهی به سرکوهی بر ترز و پیکر
 گاهی به جهانی که در خاک چو احگر
 که کوه و کوهی ریک و کوهی جوی و کوهی جر
 که بار به پشت اندر مانند استر
 بویزه همی گشتم از این بحر بدان بر
 زیرا که به شمشیر شد اسلام مقرر
 واجب نشود تا نشود عقل مجبر؟

تقلید نپذیرفتم و حجت نهفتم
 ایند چونجو اهد بکشاید در رحمت
 روزی برسیدم به دشری کان را
 شهری که همه باغ پر از سرو و پر از گل
 صحراش منقش همه مانده دیا
 شهری که دونیت جز از فضل منالی
 شهری که دو دیا پوشند حکیمان
 شهری که من آنجا رسیدم خردم گفت
 رقم بر دباش و بگفتم سخن خود
 دیای معین است در این خاک معانی
 این چرخ برین است پر از اختر عالی
 رضوانش گمان بر دم این چون بشنیدم
 کفتم که «مرافض ضعیف است و نشد است
 دار و نخرم هرگز بی حجت و برهان
 گفتا «مبرانده که من اینجای طمیم
 از اول و آخرش پرسیدم آنکه
 وز جنس پرسیدم وز صنعت و صورت

زیرا که نشد حق به تقلید مشر
 دشواری آسان شود و صعب میسر
 اجرام فلک بنده بد، افلاک مسخر
 دیوار زمرده و خاک مشر
 آبش عمل صافی مانده کوثر
 باغی که دونیت جز از عقل صنوبر
 نه تافته ماده و نه بافته نر
 «اینجا بطلب حاجت و زین مترل مگذر»
 گفتا «مبرانده که شد کانت به کوهر
 هم در گرائیه و هم آب مطهر
 لبل که بهشت است پر از پیکر دلبر»
 از گفتن بامعنی و از لفظ چو شکر
 مگر به درشتی تن وین کونه احمر
 اوز در دیندیشم و تیوشم مگر
 بر من بکن آن علت مشروح و مفسر
 وز علت تدبیر که هست اصل مدبر
 وز قادر پرسیدم و تقدیر مقدر

کلین هر دو جدا نیست یک از دیگر دایم
 او صانع این جنبش و جنبش سبب او
 وز حال رسولان و رسالات مخالف
 و الگه پیریدم از ارکان شریعت
 وز روزه که فرمودش ماه نهم از سال
 وز خمس فی و عشر زینبی که دهند آب
 وز علت میراث و تفاوت که در وهست
 وز قیمت از زاق پیریدم و گفتم
 بینا و قوی چون زید و آن دگری باز
 یک زاهد رنجور و دگر زاهد بی رنج!
 ایندکنند جز که همه داد، ولیکن
 من روزی بینم و کوئی که شب است این
 کوئی «به فلان جای یکی سنگ شریف است
 آزر به صنم خواند مرا تو به سنگی
 دانا که بگفتش من این دست به برزد
 گفتا «بد هم داروی باجحت و برهان
 ز آفاق و ز انفس دوگوا حاضر کردش

چون شاید تقدیم یکی بر دوی دیگر؟
 محتاج غنی چون بود و مظلوم انور؟
 وز علت تحریم دم و خمر مخمر
 کلین پنج نماز از چه سبب گشت مقرر؟
 وز حال زکات دم و زر مدور
 این از چه محسوس شد و آن از چه معسر؟
 چون برد برادر یکی و نبی خواهر؟
 «چون است غنی زاهد و بی رنج سکر؟
 مکفوف همی زاید و معلول ز مادر؟
 یک کافر شادان و دگر کافر غمخوار!
 خرسند نگر دد خرد از دیده به مخبر
 و رحمت خواهیم تو یا خنجی خنجر
 هر کس که زیارت کندش گشت محرر
 امروز مرا پس به تحقیقت توی آزر»
 صد رحمت هر روز بر آن دست و بر آن بر
 لیکن بنهمی مهری بحکم به بلبت بر
 بر خوردنی و سببت و من مرد هنرور

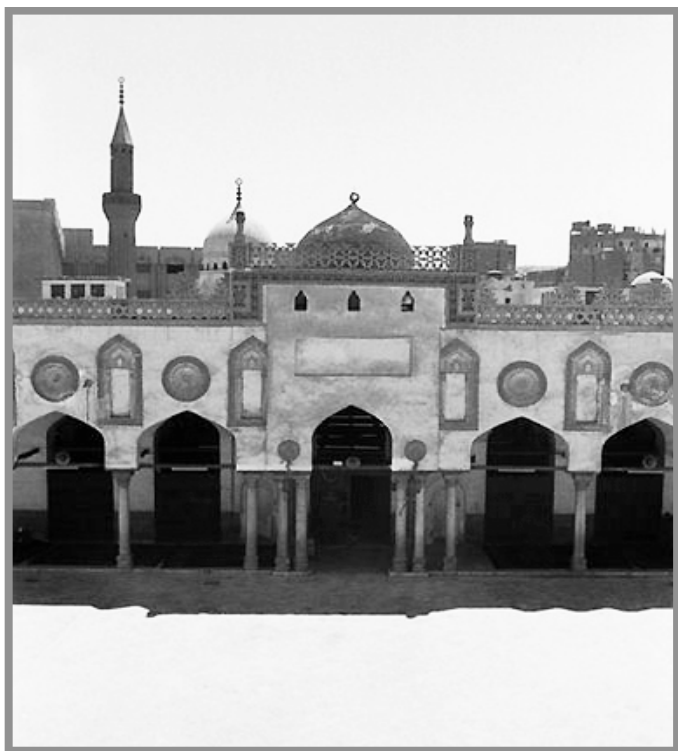
راضی شدم و مهربان گردانم و دارو
 چون علت زایل شد بکشد زبانه
 از خاک مرا بر فلک آورد جهاندار
 چون سنگ بدم، هستم امروز چو یاقوت
 دستم به کف دست نبی داد به بیعت
 دریای بشنیدی که برون آید از آتش؟
 خورشید تواند که کند یاقوت از سنگ
 یاقوت منم اینک و خورشید من آن کس
 از رشک همی نام نکویمش در این شعر
 استاد طبیب است و مؤید ز خداوند
 آباد بر آن شهر که وی باشد در بان
 ای معنی را تظم سخن بجز تو میزان،
 ای خیل ادب صف زده اندر خطب تو،
 خواهیم که ز من بنده مطوع سلامی
 زاینده و باینده چو افلاک و طبایع
 چون قطره چکیده ز برنگس و شمشاد
 چون وصل کنور و یان مطبوع و دل انگیز
 هر روز به تدریج همی داد فروز
 مانند معصفر شد رخسار مرغفر
 یک برج مراد او پر از اختر از هر
 چون خاک بدم، هستم امروز چو عنبر
 زیر شجر عالی پر سایه منم
 روبه شنیدی که شود همچو غضنفر؟
 کز دست طبایع نشود نیز مغیر؟
 کز نور وی این عالم تاری شود انور
 کویم که «خلیلی است که ش افلاطون چاکر
 بل کز حکم و علم مثال است و مصور»
 آباد بر آن کشتی کو باشد لنگر
 ای حکمت را بر تو که تشری است مطر،
 ای علم زده بر در فضل تو معکر،
 پوینده و پاینده چو یک ورد مقرر
 تابنده و رخشنده چو خورشید و چو اختر
 چون باد وزیده ز برسوسن و عبهر
 چون لفظ خردمندان مشروح و مفسر

هسته اعترافیه

ای خوانده بسی علم و جهان گشته سراسر،
 این چرخ مدور چه خطر دارد زی تو
 تاکی تو به تن بر خوری از نعمت دنیا؟
 بی سود بود هر چه خورد مردم در خواب
 نخته چه خبر دارد از چرخ و کواکب؟
 این خاک سیه بیند و آن دایره سبز
 نعمت همه آن داند کز خاک بر آید
 با صورت نیکو که میامیزد با او
 با همی و کرسکی دارد محنت
 میدار شو از خواب خوش، ای نخته چهل سال،
 از خواب و خور انباز تو گشته است بهائم
 چیزی که ستورانت بدان با تو شریکند
 نعمت نبود آنکه ستوران بخورندش
 گر ملک به دست آری و نعمت بشای
 بنیش که شد ملک سلیمان و سلیمان
 تو بر زمی و از برت این چرخ مدور
 چون بهره خود یافتی از دانش مضمر؟
 یک چند به جان از نعم دانش بر خور
 میدار شناسد مره متعنت و ضرر
 دادار چه رانده است بر این گوی مغبر؟
 که روشن و که تیره کبی خشک و کبی تر
 با خاک همان خاک نکو آید و در خور
 باجیه سقا طون باشعیر مطیر
 سیری شمر دخیرو همه کرسکی شر
 بگر که زیارانت نماند کس ایدر
 آمیزش تو بیشتر است انده کمتر
 منت نهند بر تو بدان ایند داور
 نه ملک بود آنکه به دست آرد قصر
 مرد خرد آنگه جدا دانت از خر
 چو نان که سکندر شد با ملک سکندر

Nasīr al-Khusrō

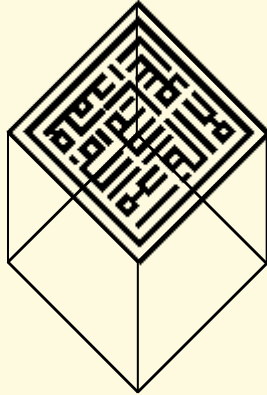
وقصیده اعترافیه



ناصر خسرو قبادیان

Носири Хусрав

ن



noon hierographers

green mountain

virginia

usa